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ING SÉANCE
AND
AN EXPOSURE

BY
SYDNEY A. MOSELEY

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AN AMAZING SÉANCE
AND
AN EXPOSURE

THE Book of the Season for the
Public, and Service Men.

The Fleet from Within

By SYDNEY A. MOSELEY.

Author of "The Truth about the
Dardanelles," "With Kitchener in
Cairo," etc.

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THE THOMAS BROTHERS.

AN AMAZING SEANCE AND AN EXPOSURE

BY

SYDNEY A. MOSELEY

AUTHOR OF "THE FLEET FROM WITHIN," "THE TRUTH ABOUT
THE DARDANELLES," "WITH KITCHENER IN CAIRO," ETC.

With an Introduction by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle



LONDON AND EDINBURGH:
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To
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WHO FORETOLD THIS BOOK
AND OTHERS

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION BY SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE .	IN
AUTHOR'S FOREWORD	XIII
SOUTH WALES FERMENT	19
AN IMPROMPTU SÉANCE	28
THE THOMAS FAMILY	34
AN AMAZING SÉANCE	41
THE CONTROVERTED SÉANCE	48
THE SHOE LANE SÉANCE	51
VARYING VIEWS	60
WHITE EAGLE IN REGENT STREET	77
IN GHOSTLAND	81
THE WOMAN IN WHITE	88
THE DANGER OF SÉANCES	90
SIX SÉANCES—	
I. THE CARDIFF SÉANCE	92
II. ACCOUNT OF SÉANCE AT PONTLLANFRAITH	93
III. SÉANCE HELD AT PONTYPRIDD FEBRUARY	
6TH, 1919	94
IV. SÉANCE HELD AT PENKHIWCEIBE MARCH	
9TH, 1919	96
V. RECORD OF SECOND CARDIFF SÉANCE	97
VI. SÉANCE AT HEDLGERRIG FEBRUARY	
17TH, 1919	99
THE MEDIUM IN THE MASK	101

	PAGE
AN AMAZING SEQUEL	112
"WHITEY"	126
A RECORD OF FORTY SÉANCES	131
THE MYSTERIOUS MRS. B.	148
SIR IAN HAMILTON'S ADVENTURE	164
CONCLUSION	166

INTRODUCTION

By SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

MR. SYDNEY MOSELEY is the latest example of a gentleman who has approached the subject of spirit survival and spirit communion with an open mind, and has been convinced by the evidence. His researches have not extended over a long period of time, but he has had exceptional opportunities of seeing and recording some outstanding cases which must make a deep impression upon any mind capable of reason. He has asked me to write an introduction to his little book, which I do the more willingly because I have myself had some experience of three of the leading examples of mediumship to which he refers.

The first case is that of the Thomas brothers, the two Welsh miners, whose powers I witnessed at Cardiff. A considerable controversy arose in the London Press as a result of this sitting, a controversy which was deplored by many spiritualists as drawing public attention too much to the cruder and more material phenomena. I sympathise with this feeling upon the part of those to whom psychic religion is a very sacred thing, but at the same time I believe that we are dealing with a thoroughly material generation, with limited and self-satisfied religious and scientific lines of thought, which can only be broken up and finally rearranged by the shock of encountering physical phenomena which are outside their philosophies. This whole campaign is, in my belief, engineered from the other side, and one can continually catch glimpses of wisdom and purpose beyond that of the world. The levitation of a tam-

bourine or the moving of furniture may seem humble and even ludicrous phenomena, but the more thoughtful mind understands that the nature of the object is immaterial, and that the real question has to do with the force which moves it. It has been suggested to the brothers Thomas that a tambourine—which is used because its position can be heard in the dark—seems incongruous in connection with the religious atmosphere which should pervade a séance, and that some more solemn symbol, touched with luminous paint, would be more in keeping with hymns and prayer. It is probable, therefore, that the cheap jests about tambourines have had their day.

The spiritual world is complex and enormous, comprising an infinite number of beings of every grade, ranging from the sprite to the archangel. It is my experience that in approaching this new world there is some psychic law by which one finds what one seeks. If one's object is curiosity or wonder-mongering, one can indulge it; if it is to obtain touch with vanished friends, one can get it; if it is to attain high spiritual teaching, that also is within our powers. I have had no personal experience of it, but I have no doubt that there is such a thing as black magic, and that wicked men could find their like upon the other side, and make some cabal of roguery, with the limitation that the forces of light are always stronger in the end. I have myself had a very wide experience of messages, and I can truly say that in more than thirty years I have never seen one which was in any way offensive, while I have had very many which were in the highest degree edifying and stimulating. So much for the diabolic theory! Christ's common-sense test still holds good.

Humble as they are, the physical phenomena play an important rôle in this movement. Had the little house at Hydesville sent forth nothing but the highest and most inspiring literature, it would have made little impression upon the nineteenth-century mind—the

most material and formal mind of which we have any record. It was the phenomena and the evidence of disembodied intelligence which lay behind them which arrested the attention of the world and convinced those who are capable of recognising evidence. So also during the seventy years which have elapsed the physical phenomena have been the first (and sometimes, alas, the last) stage of a conversion from materialism or scientific incredulity. If the late Sir William Crookes had not been struck by these phenomena, his great name would never have been added to the roll of pioneers, and so of many other illustrious champions of truth, some of whom seem to have remained in the phenomena stage, while others understood that these things had no more relation to the real revelation than Christ's miracles had to His teachings, and cheap jests about tables or tambourines are as relevant as jokes about loaves and fishes would be. What that fuller revelation is cannot be set down in the compass of a preface, but is to be discovered by those who take trouble. None other is worthy.

It is the mediumship of Thomas which has caused me to make these remarks, but Mr. Moseley deals with a higher phase of the subject when he speaks of the work of Mrs. B. He describes the evidence which I was able to put before him and a number of representatives of the London Press, and, if I may judge by the comments, that evidence was as completely convincing to them as to me. Thus, after the long and warm controversy which has raged in the papers, I am left, as it seems to me, in possession of the field.

I was able when the London journalists called upon me to show that twenty-four results out of twenty-six of which I had record through the mediumship of this psychic had proved reliable. Since then I have received more than ten which endorse this finding. In at least one of them the names of nearly every dead member of the family were given. Some attempt has been made

to counter these results by sending down journalists to test the medium's powers. Even these have not been entirely unsuccessful, as the account of Mr. Ulysses Rogers in the *Evening Standard* will show, but editors must realise once for all that the Powers in question can do nothing for the penny papers, that they obey fixed laws which are those of harmony and sympathy, and that the best way to investigate a question is not a method which breaks fundamental laws at the outset. It is not the smart young journalists in search of a sensational exposure, but it is the broken-hearted mothers yearning for their children, who bear with them the conditions of success.

I will say no more, lest the Preface should encroach upon the book, but I can only assure the reader, if he needs assurance, that Mr. Sydney Moseley is an honest and very sane observer, and that his conclusions deserve the most careful attention.

ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

AUTHOR'S FOREWORD

My whole object in this book is to present a straightforward record of an independent investigation into the claims of spiritualism. When the *Sunday Express* asked me if I would go to South Wales in order to inquire into the spiritualistic revival, I jumped at the offer. I was at Liverpool at the time for the *Daily Express*, and I was, as a matter of fact, thinking that the moment was opportune for an impartial investigation into this enthralling subject when the 'phone rang. It was the editor speaking from London. Would I go to South Wales? I replied, "Rather!"

Now it seemed to me a coincidence that the editor should have been thinking of the same subject as I had been, although I was well aware that a tremendous interest had been lying dormant through want of a suitable outlet. It was strange indeed that the greatest subject in the world—life after death—should have been shelved all these years, while such passing topics as most political questions are, should move the country as if they really mattered more!

The solution of spiritualism had in the past been attempted first by scientists, whose technical language had been beyond the masses; by religious leaders, whose cult offered a suspicion of emotionalism to the disbelieving; and by impostors, whose unmasking helped to render doubt into chaos.

What did it all mean? Why was it that the greatest mystery since the Creation should be treated with so much indifference by the multitude, sneered at by conjurers, looked at askance by some and feared by others? After all, was the possibility of life after death so remote?

Was it not always the same with new teaching? Was it not ever a crime to suggest an innovation? At one time it was "witchery," punishable by death; another time it was "insanity," followed by incarceration; and in these enlightened days it meant being laughed out of society. Why, was not the very act I had performed that minute at one time quite incredible? I had calmly lifted a wooden instrument to my ear and had chatted with the editor miles away. He seemed just across the way, and we spoke across miles of space and obstacles as if it were the most ordinary thing in the world. It had taken me several hours by rail to get to this spot from London, and yet in ten minutes I was back again through the medium of a wire and a piece of wood. How absurd to wonder at it all! A child could do it! That is the uninquiring mind, which takes accomplishment for granted and lacks imagination to conjure up things on the eve of accomplishment. Why, in mediæval times that railway train would have spelt death to Stephenson; that telephone would have sent its inventor to the racks had its introduction been sprung upon that generation.

All this passed through my mind when I set out to inquire into the truth of spiritualism. I tabulated the summary of my reasoning as follows:—

- A. Eminent men have averred that there is life after death.
- B. Eminent men are often misled, but they rarely lie —at any rate, not in concert!
- C. The manifestations they have observed may be due to a variety of reasons. What are they?
- D. There are fraudulent mediums. If I come across any, I shall expose them. But they will neither prove nor disprove the genuineness or otherwise of spiritualism.

Now there had been a revival of spiritualism in South Wales. There could be no better place to begin one's investigation. So I went. As I say, I had no bias. I

was able to approach the subject with a fresh mind. I had never dabbled with the theory or practice of it. I was, as the fashion was then, sceptical, but with this difference : I bore in mind the fact that I had not investigated, and until I had had proof my attitude would be "doubtful, but willing to learn."

Since then I have lived through many strange and remarkable happenings, which I have recorded in the following pages. Let the reader see if he can fail to come to the same conclusion as I did.

* * * * *

The paramount importance of spiritualism lies in the fact of its being able to give men faith and hope. I have been myself so muddled and confused by the conflicting religious doctrines that I have long since ceased to take regard of any. That state soon leads to atheism and agnosticism. So far as I was concerned at that time the existence of a Hereafter remained a matter of indifference to me, and the multitudinous bodies of good religious men who hated each other in order to obtain the exclusive favour of God sickened me at first and left me contemptuously aloof from them all. Without a belief of some sort a man may well become a rank materialist, although I beg leave to say that the company of many an agnostic I know is to be preferred to that of scores of my professing religious friends. Be that as it may. If it could be proved to such a non-believing character as I that there is no finality in life, that there is a continuation of consciousness, and that, despite the muddled notions and hypocritical devotions of many believers, there is life after so-called death, that there are indeed spiritual planes, that our loved ones live and watch, that there is after all a distinction between good actions and bad actions, that only virtue actually triumphs in the end—in a word, that our actions upon this earth are reflected for good or evil upon the world hereafter, why then, as a sensible man, one must sit up and take heed ! One night, after a particularly impres-

sive séance, I went home, where I was greeted only by the photograph of my departed mother, but I felt all the same that she was there and watching. There was nothing emotional about my actions. I simply went about my duties with just the consciousness that she was present. And I acted upon that feeling.

The establishment of the truth of spiritualism means a reconstruction of our religious notions. It means that all the various sects must set about forming a union *to do good on this earth*, to give mankind the opportunity of becoming better, worthier, and happier citizens, to give them more chance of "lifting" themselves. The religion of spiritualism does not divide our life here from our life hereafter; it holds out no promise of a paradise to come provided that misery be endured humbly upon this earth. The soul which "passes over" continues in the spiritual state which it is then in, which means that we must at once set our house in order, so that we may be prepared to progress to the higher spiritual plane after death.

I am very glad, therefore, to have had these experiences, and to have had later the opportunity of writing this book. My friends in Fleet Street and elsewhere have looked askance at me since I went spook-hunting. "You!" they have said with the sympathetic feeling of fellowship. I take that as complimentary. They are surprised that I should lend myself to such a questionable question as spiritualism. Well, I may say that I put aside other work in order to record these experiences. My friends are incredulous because they have credited me with a fair amount of common-sense and hard-headedness. Well, there are no flies on me and no green in my eyes. Also I was not born yesterday. I am prepared to prove that the evidence I have collected since my investigations is genuine evidence, sifted from a mass of other evidence that offered the slightest doubt of its authenticity. I have only quoted from those in whom I could trust after personal association. The

séances I attended which left me in doubt have received mention in the course of this book, but not all of them. If I were to tell of the happenings at all of them, they would afford wonderment, and possibly amusement. Since this book, however, is a serious effort to lift the veil that hides a great truth, I have preferred to omit these and simply give an account of those séances that were held under the strictest conditions. When I have discovered illusions, I have not hesitated to say so, as the reader will observe in the chapter on "A Great Illusion."

Let me conclude with the words I have used to my friends: I am not a propagandist, and I do not care a brass button if people believe or do not believe. It is purely their affair. My purpose—so far as this book is concerned—is to give to the public what I actually saw and heard. They can then draw their own conclusions.

SYDNEY A. MOSELEY.

PRESS CLUB,
LONDON, E.C.
May, 1919.

An Amazing Séance

SOUTH WALES FERMENT

ALMOST every other person one came across in South Wales was hot upon the subject of spiritualism, and almost every third person "did not know what to make of it." At the same time, keen believers in the science or religion were not wanting, and I soon found that many of those who were avowed spiritualists were not the long-haired cranky type one was led to believe, but level-headed men of business. For instance, three of the men who take leading parts in the cause in South Wales are Mr. T. E. Davies, manager of a local film company, Mr. C. Harris, manager of an insurance company, and Mr. Leo Joseph, J.P., a local chemist. Mr. Davies was chairman at the séance at which Will Thomas was the medium and when Sir Arthur and Lady Conan Doyle were present, and he told me that since the publicity given to that particular séance some of his clients had looked askance at him. Mr. Davies, by the bye, told me an interesting story of the origin of how he came to be a spiritualist. His father believed in it, and intended young Davies for the Church. Davies discovered during his studies the passages in the Bible which forbid intercourse with the spirit world:—

"A man also, or woman, that hath a familiar spirit, or that is a wizard, shall surely be put to death; they shall stone them with stones; their blood shall be upon them" (Lev. xx. 27).

"There shall not be found among you any one . . . that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an

enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all these things are an abomination unto the Lord: and because of these abominations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee" (Deut. xviii. 10—12).

This decided Davies. He thenceforward gave up all studies of spiritualism, and it was only after some years that a coincidence brought him back to the fold. He had married a woman who was rather inclined towards the belief of spiritualism and used to attend séances that were held at the local hall. She tried to persuade her husband to come to one of these séances, but he resolutely refused. He would accompany her to the hall, leave her there, and come to fetch her after the séance was over. This went on for some time. One night, however, he "felt impelled" to go with her, and at that séance his father, who had passed over some time before this, came into contact with him. He asked his son why he had given up spiritualism, and he replied, "Because it is written in Leviticus and Deuteronomy that one is forbidden to hold intercourse with the spirit world." Back came the reply, "Foolish young man, *why didn't you read on?*"

Davies went home, turned up the Bible, and read on, and he came to these passages, among others:—

"Then He said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!" (Luke xxiv. 25).

"All things are lawful unto me" (1 Cor. vi. 12).

"For why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience?" (1 Cor. x. 29).

"Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. xi. 1).

"Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are diversities of operations; but *it is the same God which worketh all in all*. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of

wisdom, . . . to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, *to another discerning of spirits*. . . . But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will" (1 Cor. xii. 4—11).

Thenceforward, convinced that the old orders did not apply under the new dispensation, he continued to attend séances, and his experiences have been so wonderful and convincing that he has made spiritualism one of his prime objects in life.

Mr. G. Harris is another whose experiences have been amazing. But these men take their psychical experiences so much for granted that they scarcely ever talk about them, except if the matter happens to be raised in casual conversation. He told me, for instance, of a remarkable circumstance which happened to him only a few days before I arrived in Cardiff. If this thing had happened to the average sceptic, it would possibly have driven him to distraction. Yet Mr. Harris only referred to it in parenthesis. This was the phenomenon: He, his wife, and a friend, who happened to be a medium, were just about to sit down to a midday meal when the medium, a man named Wilkinson, was suddenly controlled. He fought hard against this unexpected behaviour of the spirit control, but to no avail. In his unconscious state he jangled his money in his pocket, and then pointed to a cigarette box which was lying on a shelf in the opposite corner. In that box, it seemed, was the sum of 17s. 6d. Mr. and Mrs. Harris were wondering what this all meant, when suddenly the box virtually flew from the shelf, passed through the closed door, and was gone. Mrs. Harris immediately left the room and tried to find trace of the box. *She found it upstairs underneath the pillow on the bed.* The money was intact.

The amusing part in my mind of this experience was the concern of the medium, not at the extraordinary phenomenon, which would surely convince anybody of some hidden force, but at what he described as "the

mischievous trick of the spirit, which regarded the whole thing as a joke."

"I don't like this playing about with money," the medium said to Mr. Harris; "some people would be suspicious of me because of it. I am glad that none of the money is missing!"

Mr. Harris told me another incident, which I recalled to his mind by a reference that appeared in the newspapers, under the heading of "There ain't no such person." The newspapers had referred to the Cardiff séance at which the medium had said:

"'There's a little lad come, and he's got a message, 'The sea gives up its dead: Sidney Harris.'" One of the party asked if any one knew Sidney Harris, and the only person who claimed knowledge of such a person was a Mr. Davies, who had arranged the séance."

This sceptical comment appeared in the London and Welsh Press, and I was pleased to be able to test the genuineness of the message. Mr. Harris told me that Sidney Harris was his young son, who had been lost at sea. His ship had disappeared with all hands and left no trace. At a séance soon after the catastrophe, however, Mr. Harris received a message from his son in which the whole circumstances of the shipwreck were explained. After that the boy made several other appearances, and on one occasion was able to give a physical manifestation, which is described by Mr. Harris as follows:—

"Personal loss is the testing time of our claim that the so-called dead can be communicated with. Consequently when our great sorrow came—the ship in which our son had sailed being lost with all hands—my wife and I turned to those endowed with mediumistic powers for solace. We did not at first succeed, but, understanding in some measure the complex nature of the laws of intercourse between the two states, we were not discouraged. What followed proved our attitude to be the right one. Mr. E. J. Powell, the resident speaker of the Merthyr

Spiritualist Temple, heard of our anxiety, and very kindly placed himself unreservedly at our disposal. One of the phases of Mr. Powell's mediumship is the 'direct voice,' and at our first séance we had the surpassing joy of hearing our boy talk to us. What he said I have no intention of making public; sufficient to say it was of evidential value to us. We have held several of these séances per year during the last three years, and at almost every one our lad has manifested his presence in some way. Upon one occasion a frame of photographs, in which was one of my wife, the boy, and myself in a group, was taken off the wall and handed to me with the remark that 'we are still together, as in the photograph.' The frame measures about twenty-four inches by six deep, and was fastened to the wall, about six feet away from the circle, with two long wire nails. All the sitters heard distinctly the grating sound of the nails being pulled out prior to the frame being handed to myself. Upon another occasion we placed an ordinary copy-book in the cabinet after the sitters had examined and tested it. The séance had not been in progress more than about five minutes when the book was thrown by some invisible agency on to my knees with the remark, 'We have succeeded.' On unsealing the book we discovered two names written therein, one our boy's and the other part of that of Mr. Aaron Wilkinson, Halifax, who was one of the sitters on this occasion.

"These séances were held in the dark, but strict test conditions are always observed, and the medium will not sit unless securely roped in his chair. The sitters then join hands, so that during the progress of the séance there is not a free hand in the company. They have been the means of bringing comfort and consolation to many a bereaved soul.

"To any who have not been successful in their efforts to get into touch with their loved ones I would say, 'Persevere, for those on the other side of the veil are just as anxious as you are'; and the laws of nature are such

that the gulf of death can be bridged despite what the scoffer or the critic may say to the contrary."

Probably South Wales will never forget the series of séances that were held with Will Thomas as medium. The first one at Cardiff was attended by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, and obtained prominence by the publicly expressed belief of the famous author in the Welsh medium. I have given an account of that séance elsewhere in this book. Since there was so much controversy on this séance, I called on Mr. David Williams, O.B.E., the Chief Constable of Cardiff, who was specially invited to the séance. Mr. Williams fits in with the idealistic conception of a police chief. Blue, deep-piercing eyes, alert, and wiry, he inspires complete confidence as a reliable witness in a trial of spiritualism!

Mr. Williams gave me a sample of his detective instincts when I called. "I guessed what you came to see me about," he said. I gasped in true Dr. Watson style, and he blandly said, "From your card I see your club is in Fleet Street, and I have just been reading the announcement in the *Daily Express* about the articles on spiritualism in the *Sunday Express*."

Mr. Williams appeared to be rather embarrassed by the association of his name with the séance. He told me he had been inundated with scriptural references for and against spiritualism, and said that, if he had known what publicity would be given to his presence at the séance, he would never have gone. At the same time he stated that it was an interesting experience, that he went with an open mind, and that he had still an open mind. So far as he knew, there was no trickery or fraud at the séance. The manifestations mystified him, and he had no earthly idea of how the thing was done. "But neither do I know how they manage some of the 'manifestations' at St. George's Hall," said the Chief of Police; "that is equally mystifying to me. I confess, however, that I do not know much about these matters. If I were not a public man, I should like to

take up the subject, but my official position makes it difficult."

The chairman of the séance in question was Mr. L. Joseph, J.P., and I went to call on him. Mr. Joseph is a chubby-faced, matter-of-fact person with a rather studious mind. He was perfectly sure that there was no fraud at the séance, of which all the world was talking. "We did everything that was humanly possible to eliminate trickery."

"The séances were a great success, and there will be more!" he told me. "The same medium is not able to produce the same manifestations. Each is a specialist, you might say. Where one can produce physical phenomena, others are able to give direct voice."

"At the Conan Doyle séance the results were purely physical, since the medium could not produce voices, but we hope to get a medium from London very shortly who will be able to do this. There is no doubt that Wales is beginning to wake up in the matter of spiritualism, and that there will be a boom."

From which it will appear that the "mystery" of spiritualism is taking hold of some of South Wales' leading citizens, and it is safe to say that the simple faith of the country folk has been deeply stirred by recent revelations.

The Welsh people are proverbially emotional. Their normal moments are considered abnormal in people of more stolid temperament. After the great upheaval through which South Wales, in common with the rest of the world, has passed, this state has become accentuated and ripe for such an appeal as spiritualism makes.

Therein lies the danger. Nobody — the leading spiritualists especially — wishes to see a revival of the scenes promoted by Evan Roberts some years ago.

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The following extract from *La Gazette des Tribunaux*, the official organ of the French police, is interesting. I

came across it unexpectedly. It is dated February 2nd, 1849:

“A fact most extraordinary, and which has been repeated every evening, every night, for the last three weeks, without the most active researches, the most extended and persevering surveillance, having been able to discover the cause, has thrown into commotion all the populous quarter of La Montagne-Sainte-Genievieve, the Sorbonne, and Place Saint Michel. This is what has taken place, in accordance with the public clamorous demand and a double inquiry, judicial and administrative, which has been going on many days, without throwing any light on the mystery.

“In the work of demolition going on to open a new street, which shall join the Sorbonne to the Pantheon and l'École de Droit, in traversing the Rue de Grès up to the old church, they came to a wood and coal yard, with an inhabited house connected with it of only one storey and an attic. This house, at some distance from the street, and separated from the houses in course of destruction by large excavations, has been assailed every evening, and through the whole night, by a hail of projectiles, which from their bulk and the violence with which they have been thrown have done such destruction that it has been laid open to the day, and the wood-work of the doors and windows reduced to shivers, as if it had sustained a siege, aided by a catapult or grape-shot.

“Whence came these projectiles, which are paving stones, fragments of the demolished walls near, and ashlar stones entire, which from their weight and the distance they are hurled are clearly from no mortal hand? This is just what up to this moment it has been impossible to discover. In vain has a surveillance been exercised, day and night, under the personal direction of the Commissary of Police and able assistants. In vain has the head of the Service of Safety been continually on the spot. In vain have they let loose every night watch-dogs in the

adjoining enclosures. Nothing has been able to explain the phenomena, which, in their credulity, the people have attributed to mysterious means. The projectiles have continued to rain down with great noise on the house, launched forth at a great height above the heads of those who have placed themselves in observation on the roofs of the small surrounding houses, and, seeming to come from a great distance, reaching their aim with a precision, as it were, mathematical, and without deviating from the parabolic evidently designed for them.

“We shall not enter into the ample details of these facts, which will, without doubt, receive a speedy explanation, thanks to the solicitude which they have awakened. Nevertheless, we will remark that in circumstances somewhat analogous, and which equally excited a certain sensation in Paris, where, for example, a rain of pieces of small money drew together the loungers of Paris every evening in the Rue Montesquieu, or when all the bells were rung in a house in the Rue de Malte by an invisible hand, it was found impossible to make any discovery, or find any palpable cause for the phenomena. Let us hope that this time we shall arrive at a result more precise.”

Alfred Russell Wallace says, in reference to this quotation, that a literary friend of his has verified the extract at the British Museum, and adds the following :

“My friend informs me that he found a later short notice saying that ‘the phenomena remain inexplicable,’ and then the matter seems to have been no further noticed ; so we may conclude that, as in the other cases referred to, ‘it was found impossible to make any discovery.’ ”

AN IMPROMPTU SÉANCE

THE first séance I held with the Thomas brothers was of an extremely interesting character; all the more so because it was held at my suggestion and was of an impromptu order. I had invited Mr. Davies to come down with me to Merthyr Tydvil, on the outskirts of which the Thomases lived, and he had agreed to come. We wired Will Thomas to meet us at Merthyr station, and travelled down the same afternoon. An amusing incident happened as we sped along the coal district. Mr. Davies had been telling me of some weird spiritualistic experiences, when I distinctly heard rapping on the window. My companion, to his credit, pointed out that it was a man in the next compartment knocking the ashes out of his pipe!

Will Thomas, who looks like a footballer, and is far from *spirituel* in appearance, duly met us at the Merthyr station, and took us to meet his brother Tom at the latter's house.

"After last Monday's séance," said Tom Thomas, "we want nothing more to do with publicity. We have been misrepresented by people who were camouflaged into our meeting. Those conjurers may be able to do 'tricks,' but can they accomplish them through the agency of spirits?"

Either he was a great fraud, or he had an amazing gift of mediumship that might sway all Wales. I told him as much, and he smiled.

"Well, I'd rather attend a football match than a séance," he summed up, "although spiritualism is catching hold of the miners."

Thomas is a miner, but met with an accident, which

"finishes me from going down below." His fame as a medium is spreading, and he is in such demand that events along these lines may solve the problem of his future. At that time he was rather worried and "upset" by his experiences at recent séances.

"Well," I said, "all this can hardly impress the sceptic. Now we are a party here, let's hold a séance now—no preparations, no special invitations, no opportunity of suspicion!"

The reply was disappointing. It was the old excuse of conditions not being favourable. "And, besides, Will has not yet recovered from his last sitting," said Tom.

It is true the medium looked worried, but I said he ought to make a special effort to give the evidence for which the people were asking. We compromised in the end. We should hold there and then an "intellectual," and not a physical, séance.

There were seven of us: Will Thomas (the medium), Tom Thomas (his brother), Mrs. Tom Thomas, her woman friend, Mr. Davies, Mr. Lewis, and myself. We formed a circle, held hands, and waited. I sat on the medium's right hand, and, at my suggestion, the light was not put out.

We sang "Lead, kindly Light," and by the time the third verse had been reached Thomas clutched my hand convulsively, gasped, and shook.

"'D'-evening, Massa Deb," he said, in the heavy, unmistakable accents of the negro.

"Good-evening, friend," replied Mr. Davies.

"Glad to see yo," said the voice, which I was told was that of White Eagle, the Red Indian chief. White Eagle is a spell-binder, for he at once plunged into a calm, clear, and eloquent discourse on religious and spiritual matters. The conversation between the spirit—to whom I was duly introduced—and the circle was of a most informal and homely order.

The sitters, who apparently were quite familiar with

White Eagle, were patronising, almost condescending, and I asked for a message. The Indian replied promptly: "Tell them, 'Seek, and ye shall find.' To the ignorant all is dark."

Tom Thomas said perhaps I would like to ask the spirit more questions, but I suggested, without disrespect to White Eagle, that no doubt there were other spirits around who might care to hold communion with us.

"Oh, you want me to go," said White Eagle. "Goo'-night, frien's." Will Thomas at once had convulsions, and in a few seconds his voice underwent a distinct change. Before, it was heavy and sonorous; now it was nasal and flippant.

"Say, friends, all here again?" It was John Cheesebrow, an American and a wit. The circle familiarly called him "Jack."

Jack's epigrams, repartee, and brilliant philosophy were rolled off so quickly that I fear I couldn't keep pace with them.

"Say, an' whad yer holding hands for?" a hint which the circle, to my surprise, spontaneously took. We all dropped hands and sat round easily and comfortably while we listened to funny John Cheesebrow.

As in the case of White Eagle, Jack referred humorously to the last séance. "It nearly did Will in," he said.

"But didn't the picture shake?" somebody remarked.

"Not half as much as some of the knees!" was the reply.

At this juncture I asked whether the light might not be turned full on.

"Do you mind?" Jack was asked.

"Mind! I don't have to pay for it!" was surely a characteristic reply.

Jack complained of the cold. "We're all cold in Wales, you know, Jack," said some one.

"Well, just go and break the tenth commandment,

an' you'll sure get all the heat yer want," said Jack, who is a humorist.

This is a sample of some more of his wit: "Waal, Tom, where's yer little girl—what's her name—Margarine?"

"Margarine! What d'you mean, Jack? You know her name right enough!" says Tom.

"I know her right enough, Tom. But you know you have none but-ter!" The girl is indeed Tom's only child.

Jack sees me writing. "Is this a court of inquiry?" he asks.

"Yes," I reply. "You're on trial."

"Well, I'm not going to 'worship' you. You're out of my jurisdiction," he says promptly.

Mrs. Thomas asked for little Jimmy, another spirit, but Jack was loath to depart.

When Jimmy Wakeley, who is said to have been a Gloucestershire newsboy, took control, it was a wee, piping voice that one heard. He was happy and childish, voluble until he was asked how he passed away.

"On a doorstep. I had no food," was all he said, and the medium passed through a stage of convulsions.

"He takes a fortnight to get over that," said the elder Thomas, "when that is mentioned."

I pacified Jimmy by asking him whether he was happy now.

"Course!" he responded, and the convulsions of the medium ceased. "Else I shouldn't come back here to talk to you," added Jimmy, who now evinced interest in my presence. "Oh, you're not writing for the *Gloucestershire Herald*, are you?" he exclaimed.

I give this account for what it is worth. If it is a fraud, then Thomas is a splendid mimic and a greater scholar than he impressed me with being. If it is true, well, it is worth continuing the investigation.

Mr. Davies was anxious to know if I was impressed

by this manifestation. I told him that either the whole thing was a clever fraud, or it was evidence of a wonderful but little-known science. I couldn't tell which, because it would be necessary for me to attend several séances in order to ascertain whether the same "props." were used, or it would be necessary to become well acquainted with the medium in private, so that we could judge—

(a) whether the eloquence he exhibited during the séance was a natural gift, and

(b) whether the sentiments expressed in the circle were the same held by him in normal moments.

In effect, I told my chaperon, if I had to judge spiritualism by the night's performance, it would be a very imperfect judgment, and, as a sequence, a disappointing one.

Mr. Davies was quite candid. "If you had formed a judgment on this performance alone I should have been disappointed with you, too!" he said. "As an envoy of an important paper, I fully expected you to pick the thing to pieces before expressing an opinion. To have done otherwise would have been unworthy."

Later I had further opportunity of seeing the Thomas brothers at home. Will, the medium, is thirty-one, rather taciturn, and nervously apprehensive of failure; Tom, thirty-eight, is a virile and dominating personality, is self-educated, and a philosopher of the first water. He says he educated the Indian spirit guide through the mediumship of his brother.

When he first met White Eagle the latter could only "grunt." It took Thomas weeks to teach him to say "Good-night."

Asked how it was possible for the Indian chief to discuss John Stuart Mill and the German professor Haeckel, who wrote "The Riddle of the Universe," Thomas replied: "White Eagle controls my brother, but he in turn is controlled in the spirit world by higher intellects."

Tom was anxious concerning his brother's welfare. "There are conjurers in Cardiff," says Tom, "who are

out for Will's blood, and they may endanger his life by upsetting his magnetic forces. One of these conjurers turned up at a séance we had after Sir A. Conan Doyle went."

I bluntly asked Tom why it was necessary to bring toys—his own toys, too—to these séances.

"Well," he replied, "you can bring your own tambourine or rattles if you like. We don't mind. Some articles of the sort are necessary, because they offer the best scope to the spirits."

"But why are all these preparations necessary?" I asked.

"Oh, it's no child's play acting as a medium. I know Will's strength. We worked together in the same mine. Since he has been a medium he hasn't half the strength, and two sittings a week just about knock him up."

However, before we parted we arranged a further test.

THE THOMAS FAMILY

AFTER the first séance I held with the Thomases I decided that it would be a bright idea from all stand-points if I could arrange for a public séance in London. In the first place, it would be a good thing for the Thomases, because, if they were genuine, they would attain prominence and fame, and the cause of spiritualism would be advanced; if they were frauds, it was in the public interests to expose them there and then, and it must be admitted there was nobody more anxious than the spiritualists themselves to weed out the quacks. In any case, to put it at its lowest point, it was a good story from a journalist's point of view, and so I rang up my editor and suggested that we should invite these men to London. He agreed, and I was glad, because I was well aware that the *Express* had been sceptical of spiritualism almost since its inauguration, and I thought at first that it might demur at giving an official status to these mediums by inviting them to Shoe Lane. However, it was quite willing to give these men a chance of proving their genuineness, and at the same time to test the whole question of spiritualism once and for all. So far as the brothers Thomas were concerned, I had little difficulty in convincing them that this was an opportunity of a lifetime. Before going to London, however, we decided to hold a rehearsal at the home of their parents. The medium, too, was very anxious that they should obtain the approval of the spirits before committing themselves to this journey. It surprised and amused me at first to hear the Thomases discussing whether White Eagle would agree to permit them to undergo the public test, and also whether he himself would come to London and bring his band of spirit brothers with him. The medium

seemed to be in a very doleful mood and most doubtful whether the permission would be accorded. His elder brother had no qualms, however, and he told me it was as good as arranged. I had had other experiences that make me always remember the tag regarding the "cup and the lip," and I did not make a certainty of it till we were in the train next morning on our way to the big city, as White Eagle described it.

That night the Thomas brothers, their wives, and some friends (among whom I was included) journeyed from one end of the coal-mining district to the other along picturesque lanes, to a house that was typical of the miners' residences. Here dwelt the elder Thomases. I found them to be shrewd and intelligent people, extremely hospitable and homely. They were a veritable Darby and Joan, surrounded by a group of smiling children, happy and well nourished. Mr. Thomas, senior, was confined to his invalid chair, and I was surprised to learn that, despite his age, he had been engaged in coal-mining until about a year ago, when he was struck down by an accident in the mine. One of the party who accompanied us on this evening was a healing spiritualist, and Mr. Thomas told me that he had obtained more relief through this medium's powers than from all the doctors who had attended him. All the family are spiritualists of a healthy and robust order. The parents have sat hundreds of times. Mrs. Thomas explained to me how her son Will became interested in occult science. He had taken an early dislike to the séances that were held with regularity in the house. He preferred football and tasty meals to "that kind of silly thing." Generally, while the rest of the family were sitting, he took the opportunity of having a good feed. But one day, while Will was enjoying himself in the larder, he "was compelled by some force" to release his hold on the good stuff he had found there and go into the room where the séance was being held. At this first sitting he discovered he was possessed of psychical gifts, and he found as time

went on that he was developing *nolens volens* into a powerful medium. Will's brother, it may be perhaps significant to mention, although a coal-miner, is nevertheless self-educated, has read a lot, and has studied science. He quotes the poets, including Omar, by the yard, and his theoretical knowledge on spiritualism is extensive. Tom also has the more dominating personality, and I have suggested to him that perhaps he unconsciously exercises some hypnotic influence over the medium. This, of course, he denies, but nevertheless it remains an interesting possibility. The particulars of the career of the Thomas family are of considerable interest. Apart from the question of the psychical gifts, they present a human study. It is not always given to miners the double distinction of being mediumistic and scholarly.

Mr. Thomas, senior, has been an avowed spiritualist for nearly forty years, and has held séances at his home for over thirty years.

A sound democrat, Mr. Thomas is self-educated, and has achieved the distinction first of being elected to the Glamorgan County Council and then being appointed an alderman, an honour which he retained for many years. He was also a member of the new "Urban Council" and Chairman of the Technical Instruction Committee for Glamorgan. He is proud to recall that he once sat on the board of governors of the Welsh Universities. For some years Mr. Thomas was miners' agent in Merthyr Tydvil, and upon relinquishing the position renewed his activity in the cause of spiritualism, becoming President of the Merthyr society.

Like his son Tom, he is non-sensitive to outside influences, but Mrs. Thomas and the three daughters are mediumistic. There is still a home circle, and the youngest daughter is in a fairly advanced state of development. The family are proud of the results of their spiritualistic record, and hope still to be media for evidences of a future life

Will Thomas was born in 1888. He is the younger of the brothers. Unlike Tom, he hated study, and preferred play to books. Now, however, his ambition is to "score heavily in the line I am taking."

"Eleven years ago I attended my first séance, which was composed of a few friends, together with our family.

"I well remember ridiculing the idea of 'spirit return' and 'spirit control.'

"Scarcely had the séance began, when I felt a queer sensation, such as I had never felt before, and my limbs were manipulated by some strange force. For months this feeling was a usual occurrence at a séance, until finally my hands were used to write messages. Strangest of all, I knew what my hands would write, for my mind was filled with messages altogether foreign to my thoughts at the time.

"Several messages were recognisable as being meant for various members of the circle, but even this encouragement was not convincing enough for me, because I knew that I was conscious of them, and I had thought mediums were always in a hypnotised or trance state.

"I decided to have done with séances, but the whole of the family circle implored me to keep on, as I was now very fast developing.

"About this time some friends who were spiritualists came to live near by, so they were invited to our circle.

"The lady was a clairvoyant of the first water and one who has never been known to falter in a description.

"Through her my mediumship was put to the test, and finding my own development becoming more rapid, I decided to remain a member of the circle.

"Now I was subjected to a deep trance, and I only knew what the sitters chose to tell me. They had their own reasons for that procedure, for the tests that were formulated prevented my being told of the sequence of events.

"This lasted for a few years. Then I went to Gorseinon, where I now reside.

"I well remember on Investiture Day, 1911, my brother and I paid sixpence each to clairvoyant brothers on Swansea sands, and they told me I was mediumistic and asked if I was aware of it.

"I may say that the sixpence spent bought me the most truth I have ever heard uttered at a single sitting.

"For three years I seldom sat for development, and only when home for a week-end would the opportunity arise.

"Then in 1914 a telegram from Tom, inviting me to join him on an exploration trip in South America, gave me the opportunity I had long been seeking, viz., to get into the wilds and see how the aborigines lived.

"Back in Wales again, the home circle was re-formed, and soon my gifts were apparent.

"We had been promised physical phenomena, but, apart from a few raps, nothing happened.

"Once established in Gorseinon, the need for a fresh circle grew upon me, so I gathered a few friends and set a room apart for séances alone.

"Physical phenomena came, and so rapid was the development that I could not believe what my friends told me.

"However, every week for nearly three years a physical séance has been given at my home. Several people were invited, and the result was that I was asked to give séances away from home.

"I did not want to get too far into the limelight, because I was satisfied to do my little in obscurity.

"My advice to developing mediums is, Gather around you an honest band of inquirers ; then, when you feel your guides are of the right kind, be careful, otherwise base influences may make your downfall an easy matter.

"Do not resist rigorous tests. Trust the higher powers ; they will do the rest.

"Honest scepticism is the best food for a medium. Scoffers will starve you.

"Take no heed of conjurers. See to it that you are not tempted to play tricks."

Tom Thomas was born in Merthyr Tydvil in 1881.

"My school days were the usual kind for boys, only I had a zeal for learning, and soon it was a fight for top place in my class," he tells me.

His schoolmaster wrote: "Mr. Thomas was a bright student and never let go his hold of the topmost branch of the tree."

Thomas has always loved studying, but the opportunities were few.

"My life's ambition has been to become a public speaker, and I read diligently upon various subjects in order to equip myself for public work.

"I studied the 'mining sciences,' and for some years was very successful. Then I turned to psychic matters, because my 'materialistic' mind weaved a web of materialism around me that was hard to get rid of, and my friends considered me 'lost.'"

Thomas has held "official positions" in various parts of the Welsh coalfields, but psychic research called the loudest to him, and he devoted all his spare time to the furtherance of the spiritualistic movement at Merthyr. At an early age he was associated with the founding of a "temple," the mother of the churches at Merthyr.

In February, 1914, he was sent on a short tour to South America, searching for coal.

Since his return he has tried to solve the mystery of "psychic phenomena."

"To my great regret," he told me, "I am bound to admit defeat.

"My next great ambition is to help science to establish a link between this and the after-life. My contributions may be less scientific, but the honesty of purpose will outweigh prejudices on that score.

"I am not cognisant of any psychic gifts of my own, but even that fact has its compensations, for while I

cannot feel the various 'influences,' I spend my time to develop the gifts in others.

"In this the spade-work is done for the scientists in every land to continue the critical examination of phenomena. There is hardly a test that scientists apply that has not been applied to the several mediums I have helped to a fuller development of mediumship.

"Volumes could be written on the experiences I have had at my three hundred or so séances.

"Though not a 'pull-up' or front horse in the spiritualistic movement, I carry the 'scotch' to prevent the car of progress from running back. In this there is the soul satisfaction that 'every little helps.'"

AN AMAZING SÉANCE

THE séance we held next evening at the Thomases' house was nothing short of amazing. I write this now, although it is some weeks since I first made these notes. In the light of after-events that séance in the suburb of Merthyr Tydvil was as clear an exposition of the practical case for spiritualism as I have ever had since. The conditions were splendid, and the results bewildering to a sceptic. The sitting was held in a small and comfortable drawing-room which the elder Thomases had often used for holding séances. It was warm, perhaps too warm. In the endeavour to shut out light the Thomases had shut out air as well. There were about a dozen of us, just about as many as the room could comfortably hold. There were, so far as I can now remember, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas, senior, the Thomas brothers and their wives, their brother-in-law, a healing medium named Evans, the Misses Thomas, and myself. Mr. Evans played hymns on the little harmonium in the corner by the fireplace. Mr. Thomas, senior, sat, happy and content, in his invalid's chair, the younger Thomases bustled about merrily, while Tom Thomas prepared the cabinet in the opposite corner to the harmonium. He asked me to supervise the preliminaries and to raise any point I wished to clear. So far as I could see, the windows were securely closed; the walls were just ordinary walls of an ordinary place of dwelling; there were no trap-doors where we placed the cabinet, and no skylight where things could be "wangled."

In all, the atmosphere seemed honest enough, and the attitude of these people in general struck me as being quite ingenuous and frank, so that there could be to me

no question of mockery or fraud. Tom Thomas took up his position on the other side of the room, where the cabinet was placed. I securely bound the medium, Will (although, to be sure, I am no scientist in these matters), and his chair was moved up, its back to the wall, close by the cabinet. I was placed immediately to the left of the cabinet, Mrs. Will Thomas on my right. Since all the operations were to be directed from this end, it would have been perhaps more pleasant for a beginner to have sat a little further away. But then I was there as a callous and careful investigator. So I was pleased to be placed thus! The lights were lowered till it was impossible to see what was going on, and we opened the proceedings by singing a hymn. At the beginning of the second verse Will Thomas, who had blithely joined in the singing, suddenly stopped and began to breathe heavily. It was quick work, this getting under control. But then it is no new affair to him.

He began murmuring to himself, but although I was sitting close to him, I could not follow what he said. But presently the voice of the medium changed to a gruff, heavy tone.

"There is some outside influence trying to get hold of the medium . . ." it said.

More forced and painful sighing by the medium, and the voice begins to chide the "outside influence" for interfering. There seems to be some telepathic altercation between the rightful owner to the medium and the usurper, and I felt a certain inquisitiveness as to who this pushful stranger was. Then an apology in a heavy voice:—

"It's difficult . . . the outside influence . . . I can't proceed."

"Who is it—White Eagle speaking?" asks Tom Thomas.

"Yeh," is the dull response.

"Let us sing a hymn. Perhaps that will help," says Tom Thomas. So we sing one hymn, then another, and

finally a jolly song. The singing seems to relieve the tense situation. The chaotic breathing of the medium quiets down to a more tranquil and even sighing.

Then White Eagle comes again—he now has the field all to himself—and he explains that a lady, whose name he gave, and who was now hovering near me, wished to give a message.

“Get her name,” I prompt.

“It is difficult . . . to catch the vibration. She is new here.”

“Try.”

“Blanche . . .” he begins, and stops. “She is gone,” he says, but a few minutes later, in the middle of an address, he says he has her surname. I do not wish to give this name because it is similar to one well known to the public. But fortunately the lady is still living on this earth, although—it is hardly significant, perhaps—her husband had died just a week or so previous to the séance.

It is difficult now to recall all that White Eagle said, although, to be sure, much of his comment was well worth remembering. But the events that followed have obliterated those speeches. At any rate, when Tom Thomas explained my proposal to take them to London for the test séance and asked whether it was advisable to take this journey, White Eagle grunted an acquiescence.

“Will you come?” Thomas asked.

“Yeh, Tomo.” (He addresses Tom Thomas thus.)

“You will not fail us, White Eagle?”

“Neh. I try not.”

“I suppose you will bring Jack Cheesebrow, Jimmy, and the rest, eh, White Eagle?”

“You won’t be able to keep Jack away,” replies the Indian, and the company laugh, for they are already aware of the persistent trait of the cheerful American.

White Eagle, however, is more anxious to talk about the last séance, which was held under exciting conditions.

"It was good, eh, Tomo?" he asks.

"Yes, but not fair play," says Tom.

"Yeh, but they had a convincing time, eh?" persists White Eagle, and he goes on to express with joy their triumph over the conjurer. "But," he adds in a serious tone, "they nearly kill my poor mi-de" (medium). "Verra bad."

The company spontaneously agree, and the Indian goes on to say that it would be more helpful towards obtaining the truth by excluding such scoffers and tricksters.

When he finishes his speech he says in a mysterious whisper: "Now!"

"The physical manifestation!" announces Tom Thomas expectantly.

A suspense of a few minutes, during which time the condition of the medium shows signs of deterioration. His breath comes in gasps, and his groaning is weird in the extreme. I am alert and expectant. I peer through the veil of black in the hope of seeing what is going on. But there is nothing to see. I believe that if the medium had moved I should have seen him. At any rate, when he speaks—or rather when White Eagle speaks through him—the voice comes from the same distance, and the tone is unaltered.

White Eagle is exhorting his "children" just as a shepherd urges on his flock or as an eager performer encourages his band.

"Come along now, children! Come along. Help me!" or "Now—come, then! Come, children!"

For the past minute or so a continual gust of cold wind has been sweeping round me—for, remember, I am just close to the cabinet—and the long black curtains are flying about, throwing their folds round my neck. How is that done? I think to myself. The room is stuffy. The windows are fastened, and the door is closed. As I think something sweeps past me, . . . and then a woman at the other end of the room says exultantly:

"Thank you, friend!" "Something touched me," she tells us.

"I forgot to tell you," says Tom Thomas to me, "that if any spirits touch you say: 'Thank you, friend!' That pleases and encourages them."

So the next time some clammy thing touches me so that I wince, I say with a forced smile in the dark: "Thank you, friend!"

White Eagle is all the while encouraging his band of followers and addressing occasional remarks to Tomo.

"Quickly, children! Now!" he adds warningly.

Then the Indian chief suggests that I should place my foot on that of the medium in order "to stop him from walking about the room." He seems to relish this quiet hit at the sceptics, for White Eagle has met so many of them. He is out, I have reason to believe, to convince me, for he has said as much. What he is going to do in order to achieve the task I cannot imagine. At any rate, I have placed in the cabinet some writing-paper and pencil—at Tom Thomas' suggestion—between two pieces of cardboard, which I have sealed. Perhaps there will be a written message. If so——! Something—a doll, I believe—is tapped gently on my face.

"Thank you, friend," I say promptly.

"Thank you, friend," comes in turn from other parts of the room. Then the tambourine which I had placed in the cabinet is brought out—I hear it distinctly—and, after it is banged on to my head and face, ascends to the ceiling.

"Let's have the bird imitation," prompts Tom Thomas, and "something" takes a whistle from the cabinet and imitates birds in the ascendant. While this is going on I find myself the special attention of somebody else. Some tiny hand is stroking mine, and Mrs. Will Thomas, who is seated on my right and is clairvoyant, says it is a little fair-haired child, who, curiously enough, has been described to me before at other séances which I attended out of amusement. Then the little hands

stroke my face. This caressing mood is interrupted by some less quiescent spirit, who presses an india-rubber doll so closely to my ear that it squeaks! And then another hand, big-fingered and hard, catches hold of my wrist. I had no idea at first what this all meant, until I heard the word "watch" from the medium, and it seemed that an attempt was being made to remove my wrist watch. As it happens, I always carry it on the right-hand wrist, and so, baffled, the big hand—that of White Eagle's second in command, I was afterwards informed—contented itself by pulling up my coat sleeve and pinching my arm!

Let it be remembered that I was always on the alert to expose trickery, and every time something seemed near me, especially when I was touched, I kicked out all round me. But I always kicked into space.

Then the tambourines, dolls, and whistles began again. They were being played with, carried from one end of the room to the other end, then up to the ceiling, banging themselves there, so that everybody could hear and have no doubt. The comings and goings to and from the cabinet were always made at my expense. I received all the kicks and knocks of some of the clumsy but eager members of White Eagle's band. It was a mad frolic. One brought out a tambourine and began to play on my head. The force, gaining in power and audacity, played to time in my face and head and then came round and placed the tambourine on my knees. I fell into the spirit of the thing. I whistled the first bars of "Pop goes the weasel," and the tambourine finished the refrain in fine style.

Then something unbuttoned my coat deliberately and fumbled with my waistcoat pocket.

Said the medium in a strange voice: "The fountain pen writes, and having writ, moves on!"

It was the voice, I now recognised, of little Jimmy, the newsboy, about whom I have already written. He and Jack Cheesebrow duly came, and were in fine form. I

distinctly felt my fountain pen being removed from my pocket. Again I kicked out, but there was nobody.

"Then the voice said : "The fountain pen is curtained off from its owner."

"Good-night," said Jimmy to us. Then came Jack Cheesebrow, and finally White Eagle. We thanked them all. When the lights were turned up, and we looked expectantly, we found the floor littered with the dolls, tambourines, whistles, etc. One of the curtains of the cabinet was tied in a knot. When it was untied we found my fountain pen! That explained the allusions. Other articles belonging to other members of the circle had been exchanged.

White Eagle in bidding us adieu, with the light full on, said he would save more for the "big journey in the big city."

I eagerly opened the sealed writing packet, but we had failed this time. Tom Thomas said it took him a very long time before he achieved success in this direction.

Certainly an amazing evening that sets one wondering.

THE CONTROVERTED SÉANCE

SINCE there exists no actual record of the Cardiff séance that occasioned so much heated argument, I endeavoured to obtain an authentic record of it. Neither the Thomases nor Sir Arthur Conan Doyle had taken notes. I was able to get, however, from Mr. Ernest W. Oaten, the editor of the *Two Worlds*, a first-hand account of it.

“Had I known so much importance would be attached to the sitting,” he wrote to me, “I would have written it up before retiring that night, for that is my usual custom.”

However, I have been able to corroborate Mr. Oaten’s notes, and the following, therefore, may be taken as a correct record. Mr. Oaten says:—

The séance was held on February 15th, 1919, at the house of Mr. Wall at Penylan, Cardiff, the medium being Mr. Thomas, of Gorseinon. His brother attended with him, and acted as master of ceremonies. There were also present Sir Arthur and Lady Conan Doyle, Mr. Leo Joseph, J.P., the Chief Constable of Cardiff and his deputy, Messrs. Aaron Wilkinson, T. E. Davies, and J. Richards, Mr. and Mrs. Northam, Mr. and Mrs. Wall, and others, numbering about twenty in all.

The room was on the first floor, size about twenty-five by ten feet, and containing little furniture beyond a few chairs.

In the corner opposite the door a whatnot stood—an inlaid fancy thing, about four feet high or more—and before this was a curtain hastily stretched upon a string,

which ran from wall to wall across the corner. A guitar hung on the wall in or near this cabinet.

The medium's brother brought a portmanteau, containing a length of new rope about ten yards long, a squeaking doll rattle, a large tambourine, other toys, and two cardboard trumpets, each about twenty inches long and tapering from one inch to five inches in diameter. A small one, about six inches long, was also provided. These appeared to have been home-made of brown paper rolled in successive layers.

The portmanteau was thrown on the ground, and the Thomases invited every one to examine anything there. Every article was carefully overhauled, and afterwards the toys, etc., were placed in the cabinet upon the what-not, and the portmanteau taken out and left on the landing.

I examined the rope, apparently a new clothes line, while the medium took off coat and waistcoat and invited the company to search him. The Chief Constable and his deputy accepted, and thoroughly examined him. The latter remarked, "He can have nothing about him unless in his boots." Thereupon the medium's boots were taken off and examined by this committee to their satisfaction.

Mr. Thomas insisted that the search must be thorough, and offered to go into the next room and strip entirely. About eight of us were present up to this time, and when the formalities were at an end, the ladies were called up from the drawing-room. At Thomas' request the police were seated near him, but he wanted a lady each side of him.

A thick dark curtain was drawn across the window, but, as there was a light outside and the curtain was "porous," the Chief Constable and I from our positions could see when any one passed between the window and ourselves.

The Chief and his assistant roped the medium in an armchair, drawing the cord around his body and the back

of the chair over a holland jacket which he had put on (no waistcoat). His arms were securely lashed to the arms of the chair from wrist to elbow over the coat, and the final knots were placed out of his reach. He was seated near the cabinet. The electric light was put out, and the proceedings were opened with the singing of hymns.

In a few minutes Thomas was controlled and prayed with a slightly foreign accent.

More singing, and then the tambourine was thrown on the floor near Mr. Richards, and a rattle was thrown down near Mr. Pugh.

There seemed to be difficulty caused by the light coming from a corner of the curtain which had not covered up the window. A strong beam of light, in fact, was apparent. The light, therefore, was put on and the curtain readjusted. It was noted that the medium was tied as at the beginning of the séance. The tambourine was on the floor half-way up the room, and a child's rattle with bells on it lay beyond it.

The light was again switched off, and in a few moments the rattle was apparently being carried round the circle some four to five feet above the floor. It paused in front of me, and as it came between me and the window, the curtain being porous, I saw it suspended in motion. Thomas was talking from his chair at the time. The tambourine was heard sliding along the floor towards the cabinet, and presently it floated out again, passing between me and the light. I called the attention of the Chief of Police to it.

He, too, acknowledged seeing it. It was deposited upon the knees of, according to my own belief, Mr. Richards or Mr. Davies, and then came into the centre of the room and rattled in mid-air. About this time I felt something rubbing against my knees. My left-hand neighbour noticed the same, and on feeling around they found the guitar was sliding about. It stayed a few moments on our knees, then descended

and rubbed our shins, and presently rose and lay upon our heads. Several times the neck of the instrument gently flicked me on the end of my nose—a very delicate touch, which under any assumption would be difficult in the dark. When this happened I saw the guitar floating between me and the window.

Thomas, speaking from his chair (apparently still under control), then asked: "Is Lady Doyle cold?"

That lady said she felt a bit shivery, and Thomas said: "Oh, you'll be warm soon," and in a second or two something fell on her lap. (At the close of the séance this was found to be the holland jacket which somehow had been removed from the medium.) The sitters were continually touched on knees, arms, and faces, and Thomas was always asking: "Has every one been touched?" Sir Arthur and Lady Doyle both claimed to have received touches, and I am under the impression that every one was "touched" except three persons who sat in the corner near the door.

Several other small articles were floating round, and once we all heard the squeak of a child's trumpet just close to my right (apparently between me and Mr. Wilkinson). The Chief of Police and Mrs. Northam, who were near the cabinet, but out of reach of the medium, both professed to have been touched apparently by a human hand. Towards the close of the séance I felt something on my head, and presently discovered that it was the "whatnot." It rested on the heads of the Chief of Police and myself for a minute or two, then slid down our chests and remained on our knees a while, and at the close of the séance was lying on its side on the floor resting against our shins.

The proceedings throughout were interspersed with singing hymns and sentimental songs ("Auld Lang Syne," etc.).

At the close of the séance, when the lights were switched on, it was seen that the floor was littered with some ten or a dozen articles, and the cabinet was absolutely empty.

The police carefully examined Thomas. The rope and the knots they pronounced to be exactly as they had tied them, all the knots being in the same position.

None of those present expressed any doubt as to the genuineness of the phenomena, despite the fact that half the people present were not spiritualists.

The séance lasted about an hour and a half.

THE SHOE LANE SÉANCE

THE interest manifested in the *Sunday Express* séance was phenomenal. Days before and for long afterwards letters poured into the office from all over the country. Everybody and his wife wanted to come to the séance which was being carried out under such unusual circumstances. In addition a great multitude of abnormal experiences were related by eager communicants. Some of these, alas, bore evidence of mental aberration. On the day of the séance Shoe Lane was thronged with people who imagined that a public demonstration rather than a private séance was being held. It was not possible, unfortunately, to accommodate even those who had some particular qualification to be present. In the room in the *Express* building where the séance was to be held a crowd of distinguished people assembled early. But before the proceedings were actually opened it was necessary to weed out a number of these. Since it was impossible to invite everybody to remain, it was only fair that those who were specially asked to come should be allowed to attend the séance. I may say here, however, that both Will Thomas and his brother Tom were very averse to the presence of practical or theoretical conjurers. After their unhappy experience at the séance held at Cardiff, and with which I have dealt elsewhere in this book, Tom Thomas was very reluctant to repeat what he termed "a very dangerous attempt to undermine the health of the medium." On no account would the brothers agree to the presence of Mr. Maskelyne or his agents. They had no use for such scoffers as they. Therefore, carrying out the promise which I made to them in Cardiff, and which was fully supported by the

editors of both the *Daily Express* and the *Sunday Express*, we refrained from inviting the St. George's Hall wizard or his associates. As it was, both the brothers complained of a lack of sympathetic atmosphere. The majority of people who were present, they averred, were either sceptical or even hostile. But, as a matter of fact, in the list of those who were asked by the *Express* to form a committee were included a number of eminent spiritualists or scientists with a leaning towards the religion. I believe, in fact, that the majority of those who were present just before the séance opened were in profound sympathy with the objects of the Thomas brothers. It was to be regretted that some were asked to leave, and others were not able to remain throughout the sitting. Sir William Barratt, whose presence, above all, was needed on this epoch-making occasion, found that it was impossible for him to stay throughout the sitting. He therefore left just as the proceedings were about to be opened. Another eminent scientist, Sir Bryan Donkin, after taking his place in the circle, had to leave because, as he said, the atmosphere was too stifling. The séance therefore was robbed in its early stages of two of the most authoritative members. It was a pity, too, that the chief editor was unable to remain. He did at first take his place in the circle, but gave up his seat to somebody else. I rather wanted him to witness these proceedings, because, as everybody knows, he is an admitted sceptic and places no reliance on mediums and their "spooks."

It was only after very protracted preliminaries that the object of the afternoon was arrived at. I am giving later on a full report of the proceedings, so that I will content myself here with a brief summary of what actually happened. Let me confess at once that the published reports of the afternoon's happenings disappointed me in the extreme. Nearly all of these I have come across gave an unfair and biassed version of what was undoubtedly a historic séance. Those who

wrote did so with preconceived prejudice. They came to the séance, it was very apparent, either with the object of finding fraud or finding spiritualism according to their disposition. Those who came to find fraud and were baulked vented their spleen in distorted diatribes; those who came as confirmed spiritualists saw things which I, as a free lance and an unprejudiced observer, failed to see. Yet if I were to choose between the attitude of the sceptics and that of the believers I would unhesitatingly choose the latter. Indeed, those who were most anxious to tie the medium securely, so as to leave no loophole of fraud, were confirmed spiritualists. In fact, they took every conceivable step to prevent the slightest chance of trickery by either the medium, Will, or his brother Tom. The room in which the séance was held was chosen by the Welsh spiritualists. They had a free choice of any room in the entire building and were also given the opportunity of suggesting means of darkening the room, position, and so forth. It was all meant for the best. As it happened, however, the place selected was probably the very worst that could have been chosen. In the first place, there was always a number of people coming and going along the corridor and in the next room; and, above all, the perpetual rumbling of the great machinery was disturbing in the extreme. Indeed, the comparisons of these conditions with those that obtained in South Wales were so markedly unfavourable that I had doubts from the beginning whether any results would be obtained at all. At any rate, after some juggling with the electric light and manipulating more chairs than could be got into the circle, the lights were lowered, and the séance began. It seemed strange to listen to the appeals of Tom Thomas to the assembly to join him in the singing of a hymn, so strange, in fact, that for some minutes poor Thomas was a soloist. He said we ought to consider it as a religious gathering, but few at first could throw from their minds the influence of their actual surroundings,

or if they could manage to forget for a moment, they were soon reminded by the news vans outside and the heavy machinery down below. Yet I am quite sure that in the end the majority of the sitters were won over. The weirdness of sitting in the dark holding your neighbours' hands and waiting patiently for mysterious phenomena must have been a trial to everybody's nerves, for I began to hear fervent singing from most unexpected quarters. When the chair next to me, which had been rendered vacant by the occupant at the express wish of one of the spirit controls, began to move, I tried hard not to impede its progress. But apparently there was some other obstacle in the way, for although other attempts were made by an agency I could not see, it only moved a few inches. The trials of the medium were pitiful. All this time he was breathing heavily and giving convulsive sighs. White Eagle, whose voice was well known to me by now, appeared to be trying hard to make a success of the afternoon, but it was trying even to him. Somehow I seemed to feel and understand, and understanding, sympathised. For it came to this : either these men were frauds of the cleverest order, or they were genuine. If genuine, their treatment by the sceptics could only inspire the keenest commiseration and sympathy. I felt that it was completely impossible, in view of the scientific tying by Dr. Blomfield and the other preparations, for the Thomases to trick in the smallest degree. Therefore I candidly admit I hoped that they would be able to vindicate themselves and convert the unbelievers. Presently, much to my astonishment, there was a cry from one of the sceptics "that something had fallen in front of him." It was found to be a shirt suspender. After the natural surprise—one might almost say, chagrin—of those who were convinced that the Thomases were frauds, it was pointed out that there was no evidence to prove that the suspender was ever on the medium's arm at all ! Whereupon White Eagle, a trifle sarcastically, suggested

that the other arm of the medium could be examined. So the lights were turned on, and a sceptic hurriedly examined the left arm of the unconscious medium. At first he said he could find nothing, but after probing beneath the swath of bandages he said he felt "something." So the lights were lowered again. Then White Eagle said: "There seems to be some doubt about this suspender?" and Tom Thomas answered: "Yes, there is." "Very well, then," retorted White Eagle. "We will do something bigger than that," a declaration which was applauded by the now expectant sitters. Some minutes passed, and in the meantime there appeared to be some excitement in the further corner of the room. Several of the sitters at first tremulously and then emphatically declared that "they had seen something walk across the room"; others described it as a "white form or an efflorescent cloud." In the corner where Lady Diana Manners sat there was another ejaculation. She exclaimed that "something had touched her several times," and I believe that Dr. Blomfield also stated that "he had seen the materialised phenomena which had been seen by others." All this seemed so very satisfactory that Tom Thomas was ready to call to a close what was without doubt a very eventful séance, and so put an end to the enormous strain which his brother Will was undergoing. He thereupon suggested to the spirit control that the proceedings should be brought to an end. But this was met with an immediate and an indignant repudiation. "No, no," exclaimed White Eagle. "I will do something which will put the matter beyond doubt." We all waited more expectant than ever, the tensivity of the atmosphere only being relieved by the singing of hymns. I may say that our repertoire of these hymns was rather limited, and we had to fall back upon "Swanee River" and a repetition of the same hymns. But White Eagle did not seem to mind. He bade us sing on while he was preparing a surprise for us. And it was a surprise when it came. We heard a noise

and a fervent cry of "Thank you! oh, thank you!" Something apparently had been placed in the hands of two men who happened to be sitting by each other, one a fervent spiritualist, the other an avowed scoffer. The lights were turned on, and we were amazed to find a pair of braces in the hands of the two members of the committee. For several moments the sceptics were completely nonplussed. Then came the inevitable flaw. "Were the braces on the medium?" some one asked. "How do we know?" while some one else declared that "nobody saw the braces on the medium, and if they were on they were probably unbuttoned and could therefore be manipulated with his teeth!" Now this seemed to me to be a most unfair innuendo, and I did not hesitate to say so. The committee of searchers included a detective, Mr. Basil Thomson, of Scotland Yard, and Mr. Bagley, of the Psychical Research Society, and it was surely up to them to have searched the medium. In any case Thomas had to walk from one end of the *Express* building to the other, and it would have been an impossibility for him to have done so without serious inconvenience had his braces been unbuttoned. To declare that he could have manipulated them with his teeth is an assertion worthy of no fair-minded man, and to say that they were thrown a distance only within the range possible of accomplishment by the teeth is discounted by the fact that before the manifestation White Eagle had deliberately declared that he would give "the old gentleman something." The old gentleman happened to be Mr. John Lewis, editor of the *International Psychic Gazette*, a spiritualist of over twenty years' standing. Next to him was, as I have said, a sceptic who would have been the very first to get hold of any element of trickery. For the medium to have used his hands at all was out of the question, and nobody, not even those who were anxious to reveal the brothers as frauds, even as much as suggested this. I found in discussing the circumstances of

the afternoon's happenings that Dr. Blomfield was quite prepared to reason the matter out, but he placed the onus of proof on us who believed in the genuineness of the manifestations. I tried to turn the tables on him by suggesting that if he could not say with certainty that the medium had himself manipulated the braces incident he would kindly tell me who did. And so we were at cross-purposes: those who believed and those who were still sceptical; that was the whole situation in a nutshell. If those men can solemnly and honestly declare after the *Sunday Express* séance that spiritualism is a fraudulent and unworthy science, then there is nothing more to be said—at any rate, to such people. Nothing would make them believe, although in the dark and before it was possible for them to exchange views with their fellow-sceptics they seemed to be seeing things which they could not understand, and which they were not, while they were in that condition, ready to question. In the dark they admit seeing something walk across the floor; in the light they recover their composure and their attitude of doubting contempt. The attitude they adopt is clearly suggestive of those who are secretly perturbed and puzzled but who outwardly spurn the science because to believe in spiritualism is not considered “good form”—as yet!

VARYING VIEWS

Now I am giving the *Sunday Express* séance in full, because, so far as I am concerned as an independent investigator, I am satisfied that it was a conclusive test of the genuineness or fraud of spiritualism, and that, far from producing doubtful results or evidence of fraud, it was really an epoch in the history of spiritualism. It was the first time a London daily newspaper had gone to the trouble of inviting an accepted medium and a committee of scientists to hold an investigation in its own office, and it was the first time that a medium whose honour was at stake had accepted so dangerous an offer as to come to London to give a séance under conditions that at once jeopardised its success and consequently risked the medium's reputation and placed on trial the entire cause of spiritualism. The Thomas brothers had nothing to gain from a financial standpoint by accepting this offer. They had indeed received tempting monetary bait from other quarters, but had never bitten! While it was true that both the brothers were eager to leave their hazardous and uninteresting employment as coal-miners, it was equally true that they had no desire to appear on any variety stage for a fee that would tempt even a miner!

I made the Thomases no other offer than that I would pay them, on behalf of the *Sunday Express*, all their expenses, give them a good time, and see fair play. The main thing that should weigh on them, I impressed, was that they had the chance of a lifetime to prove once and for all their claims as mediums and the truth of spiritualism. They would have no chance of faking. "If you two men are frauds," I told them candidly, "you won't

stand a ghost of a chance of deceiving the *Express* committee. We shall select our own room, we shall bring the toys, we shall do the tying, and we shall decide the conditions of the séance."

The reply was, "So long as we have fair play we do not mind." Will Thomas said: "I don't mind how they tie me," but Tom Thomas added: "They must not be cruel in their tying. Let them have a scientist who understands tying. Why, I could tie him myself, and he would fail to free a finger. But it wouldn't do for me to make the offer."

I have given my views of what happened at the séance. Still, one has to recognise the extraordinary fact that people hardly ever agree on a simple item of evidence. Either our eyes are of varying myopic tensivity, or our senses are attuned differently, or perhaps we are being fooled all the time by capricious forces of which we wot not! If the judgment of individuals upon the same issue always varies, as it almost always does in regard to every subject under the sun, there is no alternative for even a modest man but to rely upon his own judgment and trust to luck that it happens to be the right one. Take this instance of the historic séance. Brushing aside the opinions expressed by a few who were morally scared to say what they secretly thought, we have a number of sensible and honest men sitting in the same conditions, at the same time, and at the same place, seeing differently, thinking differently, and thereby judging differently. The man who sat next to me was certain that the whole thing was a fake—a fraud from beginning to end. He was as sure of that as I was that the whole proceedings from beginning to end were honest and above-board. I fear I argued with him—a sheer waste of time. In the end I believe he had a suspicion that I was a confirmed spiritualist, and that I was one of Thomas' confederates!

The account of one of the eye-witnesses—not myself—published in the *Express* next day, gives an excellent

idea of this conflict of judgment. It was labelled "*Verdict on the Welsh medium*," "*No evidence of any supernatural power*," "*Full description of the test séance*." Of course this was the verdict of an individual writer, and I have given my own and that of others in order that the reader may hear all sides before passing judgment.

This sitter seems to have been mainly impressed with the absence of tambourine display, which is always jeered at by the sceptic as being pantomimical! He begins by what he considers as the keynote of the whole proceedings:—

"No bells were rung and no tambourines were wangled" at the séance which the brothers Tom and Will Thomas, the Welsh spiritualists, in whose genuineness Sir Arthur Conan Doyle has expressed his belief, gave at the *Sunday Express* office.

Bells were there and tambourines were there, but "they lay well beyond arm's length of the chair in which Will Thomas, the medium, sat securely tied, and they lay there for nearly two hours, untouched. White Eagle, the Red Indian chief, who was supposed to be hovering about, did not even give them a shake."

Three articles, which were in the medium's possession when the séance began, were thrown a short distance—in the dark. "There was nothing to show that they were thrown by spiritual agency. Some of those who attended the séance were of opinion that it was not impossible for the medium to have thrown them with a swing of his head, although Tom Thomas gave no support to this simple explanation. None of the leading spiritualists who attended professed himself quite convinced. Nothing happened which could not be accounted for by ordinary physical means. If the spiritualist mediums are to prove their claims, they must try again."

His next point is printed in bold type:—

"The chair had previously been screwed to the floor with iron angles. This excluded the possibility of the medium moving the chair along to the corner

where the bells and tambourines were—if White Eagle had desired him to do so.”

Will Thomas sat with his back to the wall at one end of the room ; Tom sat opposite him at the other end. The rest of the company sat right and left. Will wore no collar, and the neck of his shirt was unbuttoned. He wore no waistcoat.

A number of new toys—tambourines, rattles with little bells, and a couple of small indiarubber dolls—were placed on a chair in the corner of the room on the right of Will Thomas. A small sealed packet, containing writing-paper and pencil, was placed with them. They were screened off by a green curtain.

“The séance was no different from thousands of others, except that little happened. There was one curious incident near the beginning. One of the sitters occupied a chair close to Will Thomas’ left, and the medium asked that he should move. He took a seat two or three yards away on the right. This gave Will room to swing anything with his mouth, if the ‘spirit’ impelled him to do so.”

That last sentence surely should have been printed in italics. As a matter of fact, the reason why the control asked the sitter to move soon became evident. I leave Mr. Lewis to explain it :—

“The first symptom of anything abnormal happening was the sound of a chair rocking. A sitter reported it was the vacant chair to the left of the medium. A gentleman asked Tom to turn his electric torch on to it, but Tom demurred. The gentleman became argumentative, and said he wished to protest that the chairman was not complying with one of the conditions of the séance, namely, that the light should be put on at any moment by request. We had not heard of any such stipulation. It would have been a rather foolish condition to accept. Tom held his ground, however, and said that Dr. Wallace would be able to explain later the reason for his declining. Tom said to us later that the joggling of the chair was a

kind of premonitory symptom often given before a manifestation, and to turn on the light would be fatal to its success; had the gentleman kept quiet, the chair would probably have been carried bodily by spirit agency from one end of the room to the other. In the circumstances the rocking of the vacant chair came to nothing, and Tom asked that there should be no further argument during the séance."

Apparently my worthy colleague on the *Express* had never been to any séances, for he expresses astonishment at what is quite a usual occurrence at séances. He refers first of all to Tom Thomas opening the proceedings by saying that the séance was a "religious" affair and invoked sympathy. The spiritualists who were present sang "Lead, kindly Light," and a good deal of the time during the next hour and a half was taken up with hymn-singing. When "Abide with me," "Onward, Christian soldiers," and "Meet me at the river" had been exhausted, the charms of "Way down upon the Swanee river"—where White Eagle may have come from—were tried.

"It was long before anything happened, but a voice which sounded like Will Thomas's at last spoke and announced itself as that of White Eagle, the Red Indian. Tom Thomas and White Eagle had a little talk across the darkness, and White Eagle agreed to do his best for the company.

"Whether it was that the tying up of Will Thomas had been too well done to suit the spirit of the dead Indian brave, or that the atmosphere of the room was a little too warm for his comfort, or that spirits are offended when mediums' chairs are screwed to the floor, for one reason or another, White Eagle found it difficult to show his powers. Gasps came from the unseen medium, as if he were making some exhausting effort. These gasps, the singing of hymns, cross-talk in undertones, and pauses of silence alternated.

"Then one of the sitters, on the left of Will Thomas,

said : 'Something touched me.' Tom Thomas switched on an electric torch. The 'something' was a metal spring bangle. It had fallen on the floor after striking one of the sitters. It was now picked up, and the torch switched off.

"More singing, more gasps, more silence, and a request to White Eagle to do a little better. White Eagle responded.

" 'Something touched me,' said Mr. Basil Thomson after a while. It was a small button or medallion, made like a brooch, which Will Thomas had worn in the lapel of his coat.

"The time dragged on, and the tambourines and bells remained unjingled. This was disappointing, and White Eagle was begged to try to do something more convincing than the bangle and the button. He made a final effort.

" 'Thank you! thank you!' exclaimed one of the spiritualists with fervour. The lights were turned up, and a pair of old braces was seen. It had fallen two or three yards from the medium's chair. One member of the circle stated that he heard it swinging to and fro before it fell.

"There was a good deal of doubt where the bangle had come from, although Tom Thomas said it was on his brother's arm before the séance began. Nor was it clear whether Will Thomas' braces were buttoned on his trousers in the usual way when he was tied in the chair.

"One of the spiritualists suggested that the bangle had been 'dematerialised' in order to take it off the arm. Other persons expressed doubt whether it had been on the arm at all."

Before giving the most carefully written account of all, I append the views of some of the committee who were present. I wrote first of all to Mr. David Gow, editor of *Light*, and asked him for his frank opinion as to the *Express* séance. *Light* thought that a great deal of

valuable emotion and brain tissue had been and was being wasted over this question of physical phenomena in connection with the Welsh collier medium. There was a right and a wrong way of doing things, and in this instance they had seen an obstinate persistence in entirely wrong methods, which led nowhere except to confusion and distraction. The *Daily Express* had said that the result of the test séance with the medium Thomas was to show that there was "no evidence of any supernatural power." Nobody but a fool looks for any evidence of the "supernatural" anywhere. Whatever powers and forces there are in nature must obviously be natural. The only suggestion of anything supernatural they had seen in life was the almost supernatural want of elementary common-sense in the popular investigation of the reality of psychic phenomena. If a man seriously wants to discover the facts he can do so by consulting the records and testimonies of authorities; their names have been repeated in the Press almost *ad nauseam*. If he regards himself (as some do) as the only satisfactory authority on the question, then it is open to him to go seriously to work and investigate the question in his own domestic circle, just as hundreds of others have done, and then there can be no question of fraudulent mediums, conjurers, and all the other red herrings so sedulously trailed across the path of investigation.

"We who have given years of careful and painstaking study to the question have arrived at certain conclusions, and we recognise, therefore, that we cannot speak with the same freedom and assurance as those who, knowing just nothing at all, are untrammelled by any sense of responsibility or limitation of knowledge. We know there is a force or power associated with certain human beings not yet properly understood, more or less capricious, but capable of use as a method of demonstrating the existence of intelligence apart from the human

experimenters. The evidence is piled up in many volumes: it is attested by the experiments of thousands of people, ranging from eminent scholars and scientists to the ordinary Smiths and Joneses of the community.

“Of course there are many persons who are totally unaware of the fact, and seem to feel a sense of injury about it. They passionately repudiate the matter, and appear to labour under the delusion that it is somebody’s duty to convince them on pain of their severe displeasure. They vociferate denials and hurl abuse right and left. Of course it is very serious. Obviously the whole cosmic scheme ought to stop until they have had the matter explained to them and given it their solemn imprimatur. We have met them often and had to explain (politely, of course) that it did not really matter a straw whether they believed or not. Their disbelief was their affair, not ours.”

Mr. John Lewis, the editor of the *Psychic Gazette*, took the depositions of the brothers Thomas in my presence, and kindly read out to me his proposed account of the séance, which I can heartily commend. After describing the preliminaries, Mr. Lewis goes on to say:

The “sitters” took their places, forming a horseshoe, and joined hands. The gentlemen at the ends of the horseshoe had to hold the wrists of their neighbours with their disengaged hands, so that there was no human hand in the circle free or unaccounted for. On the medium’s right there was a cabinet, consisting of a piece of green curtain stretched across a corner of the room. In this were placed a chair and a number of new toys, specially bought for the séance, including tambourines and india-rubber dolls. These were examined before the séance with some symptoms of amusement. On Will’s left there was an unoccupied chair, vacated, we believe, shortly after the séance opened, by a gentleman who went over to the other side of the room at White Eagle’s request.

Now all is ready, the lights are turned out, and Tom Thomas assumes the conduct of the séance. He said he wished every one present to consider that, as far as he and his brother were concerned, this was a religious ceremony, and, although they invited critical examination and investigation, they wished some moiety of sympathy from each one of them during the hour or so they would be together. Hands had now been linked and no one must break the link without getting permission, which he would ask for from the spiritual control or guide of the séance. Any sudden breaking of the link would involve danger to the medium when he was in a state of trance. Dr. Abraham Wallace concurred in this necessary condition.

The hymn "Lead, kindly Light," was then sung, Tom leading off in a nice musical voice, with not many joining in. The company appeared to be a little shy of singing even with "the encircling gloom" to screen it. At its completion the medium, who had apparently relapsed into trance, offered up prayer, or rather some spiritual intelligence controlling him did so. The voice seemed altogether different from that of the nervous young man we had spoken to before he went to sleep. The prayer was a beautiful composition, almost like a poem, and it was uttered with such simple fervour and such thrilling impressiveness that we felt at once an influence of power had taken control of the proceedings. After it was concluded Tom explained that it was White Eagle, his brother's Chief Indian control, who had prayed. Any attempt to reproduce the invocation from memory can give only a poor notion of its beauty, but its substance was something like this:—

"Great source of light, Father of all, we are gathered here to ask the help of the Higher Intelligence to produce for us some little manifestation of survival after bodily death. Help us to show the people gathered together that we who once lived as they do upon the earth are here with them, though not visible to mortal eyes. Help

them to realise that, though here, we cannot command any manifestation, and that that can only be given through the aid of their own sympathy and help. This is all we ask, in the name which is love. Amen."

The effect of this earnest appeal to the Highest was most noticeable. The atmosphere seemed at once swept clear of levity or scoffing, and when the next hymn, "Abide with me," was sung, there was a greater volume of harmony, a finer ring of earnestness, from that little company of clever, sceptical, hard-headed journalists, conjurers, physicians, criminologists, and psychical researchers, which probably surprised themselves. As the séance proceeded they sang heartily hymns which had perhaps never issued from their lips since their old Sunday-school days: "Onward, Christian soldiers," "Shall we gather at the river?" etc., etc. This was itself a remarkable spiritual phenomenon.

At an early stage Tom asked White Eagle if the light was sufficiently excluded, and the reply was in the negative, for one part of the window particularly was not sufficiently screened. This was remedied somewhat, but not to White Eagle's complete satisfaction. As, however, there had already been much delay, Tom asked him to "carry on if possible." That was not the only circumstance that made the room anything but an ideal place for the manifestations, as machinery of some kind was heard constantly thumping overhead, and sounds of noisy waggons and noisier newsboys came in at the open windows.

Through all this medley of melodious and discordant sounds another kind of voice was heard. As the medium sank deeper and deeper into the depths of his trance he was heard breathing heavily, and he gave forth, not the sonorous or stertorous snoring one has heard with other mediums, but a curious weird whistling, like a gale of wind. The effect was reminiscent of a Scottish Covenanter's conventicle, with its reverent psalm-singing, on a dark and stormy night among the hills, while the

furies were howling a lament of dismay at the sight of so much virtue. This circumstance appears to have strongly impressed Lieut.-Colonel Claude Lowther, M.P., one of the sitters, who remarked on it in the *Daily Express* as follows: "No sooner did the audience cease from singing than the medium emitted the most hideous, distressing sounds, uncomfortably reminiscent of suffering fellow-passengers on a Channel steamer, in a gale of wind, midway between Folkestone and Boulogne." Had Will been conscious, he would probably have been ashamed of himself!

Now the extraordinary omission from the *Express* report was all mention of a mysterious form that was seen by some of the sceptics to cross the floor.

Lady Diana Manners and Colonel Lowther said they had seen some form cross the room; they had distinctly heard a treading across the room. Others said they had noticed something, but could not say what it was. Mr. Baggallay said he had certainly seen some sort of etherealisation in the direction indicated. This manifestation proceeded no further, and some sitter said: "Let us have some of the toys!"

Next day Tom, referring to this incident, said: "I had myself seen an efflorescence from the side of the medium coming towards me as if for support, but it turned towards Lady Diana Manners and Colonel Claude Lowther. The Colonel immediately said he saw something vaporous, and Lady Diana said something had repeatedly touched her."

Lady Diana Manners said she was much impressed by the proceedings at the séance. She said she thought she saw "something white."

Tom, addressing White Eagle, said: "Do not expend the power in producing any material form; go into the cabinet and fling out these toys."

White Eagle replied: "Tomo, I am attempting something bigger than that. So much has been said about the playfulness of toy-swinging and tambourine-ringing

without a thought that the nursery and children's toys are associated with all that is pure, refined, honest, and innocent."

Tom said: "Proceed, then, White Eagle; I shall be very glad if something can be done to vindicate the honour of the medium and myself and the gentlemen who have been the means of our coming here."

White Eagle replied: "I shall do my best, but the conditions are very difficult."

After a little more singing the gentleman next to us on the right announced that something had fallen in front of him. The torchlight was turned on to that part of the floor, and a wire-spring bracelet was seen lying there. The gentleman stooped and picked it up, and Tom said it must have come from Will's arm. The question then arose as to whether the searchers had actually seen it on Will's arm before the séance, and neither of them could remember having seen it. (Of course we now know that they could not have seen it, for whereas Tom was stripped to his trousers, Will's coat and waistcoat had simply been unbuttoned and pulled back over his shoulders.) Tom mentioned that Will wore a pair of these bracelets on his shirt-sleeves above the elbows, to keep his cuffs from coming down. It was accordingly suggested that a search should be made at once to see whether one bracelet was missing and the other still in its place. This was agreed to, and after Will's face had been screened with a handkerchief the electric lights were put up. A member of the circle searched the entranced medium and found there was no bracelet on the right arm. He said at first that neither could he find any trace of one on the left arm, but after persevering and digging under the voluminous swaths of bandages binding Will to the arm of the chair he said he found something that might be the other bracelet. (This was subsequently found to be correct.)

Some conversation ensued, in which the speakers seemed to concur that, as there was no evidence of the

bracelet having been on Will's arm at the beginning of the séance, this discovery of a bracelet on the floor could not be regarded as conclusive that there had been any spirit agency in the matter. (After the séance we questioned Will about it, and he said: "I always wear these bracelets, and I feel sure I put them both on as usual in the morning. Otherwise one of my cuffs would have been hanging over my hand, and one bracelet would have been left in my bedroom at the hotel. If it had been in any of my pockets or been secreted on my person Mr. Baggallay would have found it.")

The lights were again turned out, and the séance was resumed. Tom appealed for composure, and White Eagle said: "If that is not good enough, I will take something off the medium you must know has been on him." In about a minute Dr. Abraham Wallace drew Mr. Basil Thomson's attention to the fact that he had seen a light descending at the opposite side of the room, and at the same instant our neighbour (Mr. Wilson, of the *Express*) and we ourselves found something soft laid on our knees. Mr. Wilson said: "Something has touched us here." We both grabbed at the thing with our linked hands, and having got hold of it, explored in front in search of anything else. In doing so we came in contact with Mr. Wilson's other hand and remarked: "I thought at first that was a spirit hand!" The lights were put up, and a pair of well-worn braces lay before us! We shouted: "Thank you, White Eagle! That's splendid!" The searchers were again appealed to, and Mr. Baggallay said again he could not be sure that he had seen the braces on Will! This was exceedingly disappointing, but we held them up before the circle and asked challengingly: "How have these braces been brought here at all?" For all were still sitting in their chairs with linked hands, and the inert medium sat with his outstretched hands, tied and sealed, like some figure on an Egyptian monument, his arms and feet being tightly bound to a chair specially screwed to the floor.

No one answered our challenge. If any one had moved out of his place or thrown the braces his neighbours would have known, but no one even suggested that anything of that kind had been attempted. The two doors of the room had been securely bolted from inside, and no one could have entered without the sitters' knowledge. Tom said: "If there is any accomplice in this room let him be exposed," but no one seemed to entertain such a possibility. By general consent, we think, this happening was accounted mysterious, whatever the originating cause.

The séance was resumed, and in a few minutes Tom turned the electric torch on to the clock. We did not know the reason, but he explained it to us next day in these words: "Dr. Blomfield asked that the light should be put on the clock. I did so, and found the time was twenty-five minutes to six. He asked if he might be permitted to leave the séance, and I refused to allow him, because I said the phenomena had just commenced, and the possibility was that we should get more. Dr. Blomfield said: 'I am perfectly satisfied that something has happened that wants explaining; that bracelet justifies you.'"

The only other phenomenon was the landing at the feet of Dr. Abraham Wallace and Mr. Basil Thomson of a safety-pin brooch or button containing the portrait of Dr. Andrew Jackson Davis, the famous Poughkeepsie seer. This had been pinned to the lapel of the medium's coat, but how it was unfastened and conveyed across the room, excepting by supernormal agency, nobody attempted to explain.

The séance was brought to a close after Tom said he hoped he and his brother had vindicated themselves as honest men. No one demurred; on the other hand, there were some distinct murmurs of approval.

The lights were put up, and the medium's bindings were found intact with the sealing-wax unbroken. We ourselves undid his coat and waistcoat, which were com-

pletely buttoned, and found that his braces were missing. These the medium appropriated, as they were quite indispensable, but he kindly gave the bracelet to Dr. Wallace, and the portrait button to ourselves, as little mementoes of the occasion.

On the same evening we had the pleasure of the Thomases' company (and that of their courteous chaperon from the *Express* office) at a modest meal, and found they had no doubt whatever that genuine manifestations of supernormal or spiritualistic phenomena had been produced at the séance, whatever verdict of inconclusiveness some members of the circle might have arrived at.

The specious nature of some "expert evidence" can be seen in the remarks made next day by Sir Bryan Donkin, who left before the séance began. Referring to the account of the séance, he says it will be amply sufficient to astonish all but convinced spiritualists at the boundless credulity of Sir A. Conan Doyle and all those who have announced their belief that these so-called "manifestations" cannot possibly be explained by trickery. "I was in the room for the best part of an hour before the real business of the meeting began with the old familiar hymn-singing, and I will give a few of the observations I made prior to leaving the room just before it was finally darkened, after one of the mediums had been bound by two members of the audience."

His points, briefly, are:—

"(1) There were practically two mediums, or (what amounts to the same thing) one medium and a partner, the medium's brother. There was also the possibility of another assistant in the person of the sitter who was placed, as I observed myself, close to and to the left of the tied medium, and who, according to the account in the *Daily Express*, was subsequently moved to some distance to the medium's right, and this was near the 'cabinet' of the 'spirits.'"

Let me point out at once to Sir Bryan Donkin that the sitter in question was probably the greatest sceptic of all present. He repeatedly affirmed to me his conviction that the Thomas brothers were frauds, and that the séance would probably be their undoing. For Sir Bryan Donkin to refer to him as a possible accomplice of the Welsh brothers is too funny for words.

Sir Bryan Donkin's next point is:—

“(2) The untied medium (T. Thomas) seems to have conducted the whole ceremony. While I was in the room he had every opportunity of seeing how the sitters were placed, and he enjoined all of them to hold ‘hands round’ all the time, and to sit with uncrossed legs. This injunction greatly facilitates and protects the ‘materialised spirit’ (should any such be evoked) in its approaches to the sitters in order to get into physical contact with them.

“(3) It is to be noted that the brother of the tied medium and also any other possible helper present were absolutely free to move about as they liked in a dark room. The possibility of any one in a ‘spirit circle’ in a dark room getting both his hands free from those of his neighbouring sitters is, of course, well known to every one with the least experience in this kind of gathering.

“(4) Among the sitters there was a considerable number of already convinced and professed spiritualists. When the time came for binding the medium (W. Thomas), a gentleman, who had apparently come to the meeting prepared with a rope or other materials for securing the medium, began this operation without any commission from the sitters. I had some reason to believe that this gentleman was a convinced spiritualist, and therefore suggested that some others from the audience should be selected in his place. This was accordingly agreed to, and possibly had a considerable influence on the subsequent happenings.

“(5) The account of what did happen is identical with thousands of other reports of similar spiritualistic

gatherings that have taken place, first in America and then in Europe, both epidemically and sporadically, during the last seventy years or more. There was one difference, however, that I noted between this occasion and the majority of those which I had attended long ago. In those meetings the company, including the medium, were arranged, holding hands, round a table ; but there was certainly no restriction on the position of the sitters' legs.

“(6) The brothers Thomas had, without doubt, a predominantly sympathetic audience. As far as I am aware, there were no sitters, with the possible exception of some or all of the convinced spiritualists, who did not preserve an open mind on the question of the nature of what they might hear, see, or feel. And I formed the opinion, from what I saw and heard myself, that the mediums were most fairly treated by their hosts of the *Sunday Express*.”

There is, of course, no question about the fair and generous treatment of the medium and his brother by the *Express*. I was enjoined to give the Welshmen the best possible time, and I did so. Before leaving London they wrote to the editor expressing entire satisfaction with the way they had been treated.

WHITE EAGLE IN REGENT STREET

WHITE EAGLE and his band of spiritual followers paid an unexpected visit to Regent Street on the day following the Fleet Street séance. The Thomas brothers had expressed a desire to call on Mr. Lewis at his office in Regent Street, and so accordingly we all repaired there. The subject which came under discussion immediately was, of course, the events of the day before, and it was soon seen that there existed a wide difference of opinion between the two brothers on one or two vital points. Tom Thomas was keen on describing what he had seen, while his brother took up an attitude based on his theoretical knowledge of similar séances at which he was a sitter, and not the medium. Having business to do elsewhere, I left the Thomases with their friendly differences and asked Mr. Lewis to put them in a taxi and direct them to my club, where I hoped to meet them. Instead of turning up within half an hour, as we had arranged, it was nearly three hours before the brothers arrived. I then learned of a very extraordinary impromptu séance that had occurred at the *Psychic Gazette* office. It seems that within a few minutes of my leaving the phenomenon occurred. There were only three at the office, the editor and the two brothers. All three were smoking, Mr. Lewis a cigarette and the Thomases cigars. Tom Thomas had been asserting a certain point of view when his brother pointed out what seemed to him to be an inconsistency in Tom's line of argument. All of a sudden the cigar which Will Thomas was smoking was thrown away from his hand by some force, and the medium became controlled. It was soon apparent that

White Eagle was in command. Holding out his hand to the editor, he said :—

“ I am pleased to meet you. You have been discussing what happened yesterday, haven't you ? ”

“ Yes, we have,” replied Tom Thomas.

“ Well, I think it is my turn now,” said White Eagle.

“ We shall be very glad to hear what you think,” said the editor.

“ Well, the conditions I came under yesterday were even worse than at the last séance we had with the conjurers at Cardiff,” asserted White Eagle. “ The conditions there included an attempt to prevent, if possible, the manipulation of the toys, and that was not done.” Tom Thomas agreed, and White Eagle went on : “ Because they failed in that task, they set themselves to ridicule us, but they did not in any way create a fiasco of failure according to the laws of mediumship.” White Eagle paused as if to give the editor a fair chance of recording his affidavit, as indeed he was, in shorthand notes.

“ Yesterday's séance,” declared White Eagle, “ was a different matter altogether. Here we were pitted up against individuals some of whom had a great amount of intelligence some whose intelligence was not great, and some who had no method in developing the little intelligence they had. The reason why I scorned the toys was this : it had been thought that toys were the only things we could handle. I knew I had at that séance minds greater than our own which wished for the production of something that could not be explained on ordinary lines. Was that not so ? ”

Thomas assented.

“ I tried to produce that which I had never produced before, even in the seclusion surrounding our home circle,” White Eagle dramatically exclaimed. “ The form which was produced, although perhaps not visible to each individual, was produced nevertheless. The

conditions under which my medium sat were the worst I have ever been up against. It is the hardest task imaginable to control a medium under such conditions, and I am glad and proud of the little which we have accomplished. There is nothing more I can say but this, that every little encouragement you gave greatly helped towards the production of what was produced. Future achievements I know not of; we can only run in concert with the truth and the demonstration of the truth. Good-day."

And so, as suddenly as he had appeared, White Eagle made his adieu. But the medium continued to remain in a trance. It was seen that not only White Eagle, but the rest of the spirit controls who invariably act in concert with him, had come down from Wales to Regent Street. At the séance held the day before only White Eagle had manifested himself through the mediumship of Will Thomas. I was rather disappointed with this, because Tom Thomas had obtained the promise of the witty American and the shrewd little ex-newsboy that they would come with White Eagle to London. There is no doubt that they did come, inasmuch as they helped their chief to produce a materialised phenomenon, but the condition of the medium was such that it was impossible for him to accommodate the other spirits who were waiting (no doubt only too anxiously) to have a look in. I am sure that the repartee and brilliant wit of Jack Cheesebrow, the American spirit, would have amused the audience at the *Express* office, and at the same time given them something to think about. However, Jack duly turned up at the impromptu séance at the *Gazette* office in Regent Street, but his remarks and jokes were delivered with such rapidity that no proper record could be made of them. He told Tom Thomas that he had been solving the problem "Am I my brother's keeper?" and Tom replied, "I am not his keeper, Jack, but I am trying to be his protector."

I was surprised that both the brothers and Mr. Lewis

treated this strange occurrence with the utmost *sang-froid*. I suggested that it was a very good story, and that, had I been present, I should have made something big of it. But apparently to these spiritualists it was no unusual occurrence.

IN GHOSTLAND

SOMEWHERE in the west of England is a tract of territory that we might call Ghostland. For here are the haunts of departed spirits—men and women who died in the dim past, but who continue to hold fast to their earthly associations.

That, at any rate, is the embedded belief of many—not, be it understood, the craven or the credulous, but upright men of intelligence who are scornful of danger and contemptuous of the ignorant who laugh at these matters.

This is no subject for mirth, the serious folk tell you, while others speak with bated breath of certain mysterious happenings which all the ingenuity of mankind has been unable to solve. Even those sceptical of the theories of after-life, or what is popularly known as spiritualism, do not deny these strange adventures in Ghostland. But they cover up their embarrassment by referring to the “mystery” (whatever it really is) as “a force,” “a hidden power,” or “an elemental.” They say that just as Aladdin was able to evoke the spirit of the genii, so it is possible to call forth a similar “elemental,” which is neither man, beast, nor departed spirit. It is, in fact, so they aver, an inhuman force, a baffling power of evil, which all men should fear, which it were hopeless to pacify or suppress. The spiritualists in these parts approach the question with strange awe. Usually they are glad to discover the haunts of unhappy spirits, and are only too ready to accept an opportunity of affording them solace by prayer and song. In this instance, however, I find a reluctance “to meddle” with the force.

"There are some earth-bound spirits," a leading medium told me, "who are best left alone. They are pernicious, full of evil, and irreconcilable. Once you approach them, they hang on to you. They follow you everywhere. Nothing can get rid of them."

"But surely you could help them?"

"Help them! They are just as obstinate as many people of this earth. They take no heed of your advice, laugh at you for your pains. I have had some!"

Another man—a hard-headed Scot—who preferred to call himself a spirit communist rather than a spiritualist, said: "One must be very careful of some of the spirits that are haunting this part of England. They are beyond the help of mankind. In fact" (here he lowered his voice to a tragic whisper), "I could tell of many weird doings around here, but you wouldn't believe them."

I told him I was all sympathy, and he went so far as to hint that since his wife "tried to throw out spirits who were unworthy of her mediumship" she had been subjected to all sorts of persecution at their hands. "They resented so much her breaking off communication with them that they tossed her about the house, jeering at her, impeding her by throwing corpses in her way. They filled her mind with the most atrocious thoughts. They tried to influence her towards all sorts of base acts . . . Oh, I can tell you we had a frightful six months of it. But now we have reached the tranquil state again. We have conquered the evil force."

This man is a successful local manufacturer, and now obtains all the best trade hints from an American spirit control each evening. He also obtains daily, weekly, monthly, and three-monthly forecasts from the same source. "I have received thousands of tips and hundreds of promises. I have not been disappointed once, perhaps with the exception when the medium has not been so well."

But while all is peace in this direction the upheaval

continues elsewhere. "I was walking home a few months ago," a woman told me, "when I beheld an aged person beckoning to me from a window. It was that house just by the infirmary. I went closer and saw it was a woman. But she ceased to take notice of me when I approached. Next evening I saw the same woman. She sat by the same window, her hand in her chin, thinking deeply.

"I forgot all about her for some time because I never had occasion to go that way again. The same woman, in the same position, was still there when I passed the house again some weeks later. I thought it strange and inquired at the house, *but no old woman lived at the house.*"

I said it would be interesting and instructive for me to see the old lady at the window, and, after some hesitation and difficulty, it was agreed. We went next evening to the house next to the infirmary.

"There she is!" exclaimed my companion as we approached.

I looked keenly in the direction indicated, but could see nothing but a frayed curtain.

"I can see nothing," I confessed.

"Oh, that's because you are not clairvoyant," replied my guide.

So I had to leave it at that.

The investigator of spirit communion or the seeker of adventures in Ghostland must be a practical man well versed in spiritual amenities. For instance, he should know how to approach the owner of the house said to be haunted. He should not knock timidly and ask in a nervous tone if the ghost is at home or say, with a shudder, that he has heard of dreadful happenings in the house. Experience, at any rate, will soon make him acquainted with several strange facts. The one I discovered upon this latest inquiry is that some owners exercise a sort of parental proprietorship of the spooks who live with them. The seeker who imagines ghosts

are public property will soon be sternly undeceived by such. When you have made your mission known to them, they answer in effect, "My ghost is not at home to you. Only personal friends are invited to meet him."

As a fact, the owner of a haunted house said as much to me. Her ghost was not to be seen by all and sundry who happened to take a passing fancy to meet him. So this visit did not materialise! But, to be sure, there were heaps of other haunted houses with spectral inhabitants just as interesting and probably more inviting. There was the one with the laughing jackass—a gruesome-looking creature that materialised in no time, laughing all the while, and dematerialised in just as short a time, still laughing. There was the little house in the woods near by from whence a loving couple would emerge, mount a phantom chaise, and dash madly through the woods. There was the lady at the door looking anxiously down the lane for some one who never came. From sunset till dawn you could observe her, the expression of tense anxiety evoking the sympathy of all clairvoyants who could behold her. Then there was the old man and big faithful dog, and heaps of other stories that originated nobody knows where and will continue to spread till nobody knows when. Anyhow I have endeavoured to track one of these ghosts around this western part of England, and have so far failed. So the last hope was the monster sprite of the great Hall. According to hearsay, I might just as well sign my death warrant as go and "get mixed up with him." As sure as fate, so I was informed from numerous quarters, the ghost would "do" for me. He would materialise and spring at me before I could get away. The stories these people told me hardly bear repetition, so blood-curdling are they.

All day long and all through the night I continued in this quest of the haunted Hall. The search was taken in order to discover a ghost, but it yielded some amuse-

ment instead. Mind, the stage setting was all that is desirable and proper for such a tragedy as is said to have been enacted here. The haunted Hall itself is several miles from the town, away from the beaten track of holiday-makers. In order to reach it you have to take train, bus, cab, and Shanks' pony. The surrounding country is at once picturesque and pathetic. Nature seems to have seen better days in these parts, and the trees, once puissant and proud, now droop in weary solitude. They say that since the ghosts came nothing has ever been the same. But if you ask them what ghosts they shake their heads. Altogether the atmosphere is in keeping with the setting. Now, another curious thing about this ghost of the haunted Hall is that, reversing the usual order of things, the intelligent people believe in it, and the credulous country yokels spurn all talk of it.

"Ghost ! ghost !" one said to me. "Me and me missis 'as lived in these parts nigh on fifty year, an' we've seen no ghost."

"Weel, I've 'eard talk of a ghost or summik," said another, "but I live next door, an' I don't believe there ain't such a person."

Nevertheless I believe there is circumstantial evidence of its existence. I know that politicians, clergymen, and at least one peer have tried to lay it, but without success.

The ghost in the haunted Hall is declared to be several hundred years old. It is of very evil appearance, "stands" eight feet high, and has a *penchant* for strangling people. Nobody has yet been murdered by the apparition, however, although I am seriously informed that it has caused at least one man's death and about half a dozen nursing home cases. Those whom it fails to kill or send to hospital are invariably scared at the figure of a tall monk bending over the bed, claspings a sharp knife ! According to another account, it takes over an hour to materialise, throwing about the room in

the meantime discs of light, in much the same manner as a conjurer juggles with electric light. Another investigator declares that he saw nothing, but "felt a most disagreeable mental influence—an obsession that threatened to overwhelm." Well, I managed to get into the precincts of the haunted Hall, examined its dusty nooks for its spectral *habitué*, and eventually was also seized with a disagreeable mental influence, but it was of pure boredom. Perhaps his Ghostliness is not out to be interviewed by representatives of the Press, or perhaps it dislikes being haunted by visitors from London. Anyhow it neither showed its famous cowl, its strangulation hold, nor its sharp knife! I have recorded it as the ghost that failed.

Another apparition, vouched for by numerous people, appears in a roadway, not very far from the haunted Hall. Its main occupation, it would seem, is to frighten horses and overturn traps. From the description furnished by an eye-witness, this ghost is very similar in appearance to the tall and mysterious occupant of the neighbouring Hall. But by far the most extraordinary story of a haunted house is that which I investigated last of all. I had first of all heard of the house as being visited by an old lady in a shawl, who was sometimes accompanied by a child. Whenever the latter appeared, a piercing shriek, as of a child in agony, was heard. This was not the only phenomenon. The form of a man was often observed walking down the stairs, and noises of laughter and cries were heard. Strange to relate, however, not every family who occupied this house saw these ghosts or heard the cries. But the stories of these happenings were so persistent as to arouse the curiosity of a prominent local police officer. Upon searching the records he discovered an amazing history in connection with the house, and by-and-by a member of the Psychical Research Society and two local men stayed a night in the house, each in a different room. But nothing happened. One of the men, however, a

naval officer, suggested obtaining the history of the house by automatic writing. The results were bewildering. At first the scrawl, which I was shown, was undecipherable. I tried hard to make it out, but failed. *But soon a clear and unmistakable confession of murder* was revealed by a strange medium and a combination of the queerest circumstances that I have ever investigated. The whole story was gradually recorded in an almost illegible scrawl. "I murdered him," began the confession, and proceeded to state the facts in dispassionate and clear language.

The confession suddenly came to an end, and this was followed by the account of the murder *by the victim!* He gave his name as Alfred Williams, and said he had amassed considerable wealth as a sugar planter in the West Indies. He arrived at Avonmouth on April 16th, 1786, on board the steamship *Maria*. . . . "Captain's name was Anderson. . . . I had been drinking," scrawled the mysterious message, "and two sailors overheard my boastings and my ambitions. They followed me ashore, inveigled me into the house, and murdered me. They carried the body into a boat, went out to sea, and then threw the burden overboard. . . . They died from the fever afterwards in the West Indies."

Closely questioned by the naval officer as to the exact spot where the alleged murder was committed, the hidden messenger drew a plan of the house and the passage down to the sea. The architect who examined the house and the plan told me it was correct in every detail.

The next point in the investigation brought to light the fact that a steamship named *Maria* had indeed reached Avonmouth on April 16th, 1786, and that her captain's name was Anderson. Further particulars of the exact spot—a cellar—where more evidence would be found, were given in automatic writing. But the architect found that the cellar was walled in. *It was, strangely enough, the only house where the builder had thought fit to do this.*

THE WOMAN IN WHITE

THE house where, it is said, Wilkie Collins obtained the inspiration for his classical work, "The Woman in White," lies in the heart of one of England's beauty spots. It is the belief of the privileged few who have slept in the house that the lady still lingers over the surroundings which have made her name renowned in literary history.

I visited the house, and slept the night in the neighbourhood, in the hope that she would reveal herself even as she did in the conception of the author she inspired; but she never came. Something in the atmosphere, however, at once uplifting and yet poignant, moved me to a strange extent, and next day I was more eager than ever to learn more about the stately "woman in white." Fortunately I came across a person who was intimately connected with the history of the family who used to reside in the house, and I obtained from him the extremely interesting particulars for which I sought.

It seems that the first to notice and remark upon the appearance of the woman in white was the son of the owner of the house. A matter-of-fact young man, he had disbelieved, as most people do, the stories of the departed spirits who renewed associations with their earthly surroundings. But one night, while in bed reading—Horace it happened to be—he heard the rustle as of a silken dress. He looked up, and was astonished to see a tall woman, garbed, not in the spectral gown that is said to adorn apparitions, but in an unusually finely fitting dress of white. He was too surprised to speak. His eyes were held by her, and by the time he found his speech she had disappeared. Although, as I have said,

a cool and matter-of-fact man, he was greatly perturbed, and related the incident to his uncle next day. As he expected, the story was laughed at as being a figment of the imagination or the tricks of a tired brain. "At any rate," said the younger man, "I don't propose to sleep in that room again." Eventually the uncle, still scouting the whole story, offered to have another bed fixed up by the side of his nephew's, so that he might spend a night or two in the same room until "matters became normal again."

That very night the uncle tried the experiment. And this is what happened. At half-past one in the morning the nephew noticed his uncle suddenly become agitated. He appeared to be staring at a corner of the room as if he could see something strange. "Good heavens!" he managed to ejaculate. The nephew looked, but could see nothing. Then the elder man, nervously grasping the bedrails for protection, began nevertheless to leave the bed as if he were being drawn by some magnetic power. He got out in a curious manner, doubling up and then crawling on all fours towards a corner of the room. Then, as if suddenly exhausted, he collapsed.

"Did you see her," he asked his nephew later, "a tall, beautiful woman in white, with large, piercing eyes that simply hypnotised? Under their gaze I felt altogether powerless . . ."

The room remained unoccupied after that night.

THE DANGER OF SÉANCES

I HAVE often been asked whether there is any danger in attending séances and whether it is true that the practice of trying to get into touch with the departed has resulted in lunacy. Without further ado let me say that the inference regarding lunatic asylums is not worth serious consideration unless statistics are forthcoming which can be verified. No figures are given, only a vague generalisation which has been used over and over again by the denouncers of almost every subject under the sun. The prohibitionist will tell you in an awed voice to look at the lunatic asylums; the atheist will tell you that most truly religious people are maniacs. Anybody who practises a cult beyond the reach of the vulgar herd is either in the lunatic asylum or just next door. Unless you favour monogamy strictly, you will take a lease of Colney Hatch. On the other hand, if you repress yourself and do not practise free love you are just as good as done for. I think that any subject that is not entered into broadly and openly will oppress the mentality. The clandestine nature of spiritualism makes for evil. The method of holding séances in the dark and under circumstances that entail a strain on the mind can do no possible good and a great deal of harm. The intense mental concentration and physical contraction must adversely affect many. I agree in part with the contributor in the *Evening Standard* who says: "We are surrounded by unseen influences, some of which are good, while some are capable of exercising, and do exercise, a disastrous influence upon all with whom they come in contact. Evidence goes to show that immorality

and insanity are some of the effects which have been produced by absorption in spiritualistic matters.

"There are victims of séances, just as there are victims of the drug habit, and men of culture and capacity have suffered shipwreck in consequence of their obsessions.

"It is a fascinating study, but hysteria, insanity, and the break-up of the moral life are a heavy price to pay for the inadequate information which hitherto has been provided through the mediums of what are called psychic phenomena."

On the other hand, Conan Doyle says all séances in their elementary stages exact their toll, although, as I have said, scientific research should be left to scientists.

In effect spiritualism in its present elementary and uncertain state is not a thing for the masses. They should no more be permitted to play with these matters than they should with any science that requires careful training and deep teaching. Spiritualism should be the property of the scientific experts, who should be officially encouraged to make active and immediate research, so that the results of their labours should be made known to the waiting world. Then, and not till then, will sufficient headway be made as will admit of the holding of séances by the multitude. I have quoted in the chapter on "Ghostland" the account of a man whose wife had undergone some severe trials at the hands of these spirits. Together with two friends, I called on the woman in question and saw from her physical state the havoc that had been wrought on her. The husband, however, is a hard-headed business man, and in conversation betrays nothing of an abnormal nature. The curious thing is that he is a confirmed believer in spirit communion and holds séances, at which his wife is the medium, every evening.

SIX SÉANCES

TOM THOMAS has sent me the following summarised record of his famous séance—the first opportunity he has had, I believe, of making his version public—and of five other séances, several of which raised an equally stormy discussion.

I

THE CARDIFF SÉANCE

As far as I can recall, the following is the record of the now famous Cardiff séance, held at Penylan on February 15th, 1919.

The medium arrived in good time; and I, his brother, for the first time accompanied him. Among others present were Sir A. Conan Doyle, Messrs. D. Williams (Chief Constable, Cardiff) and Harrison (Superintendent of Police, Cardiff), Leo Joseph, Esq., J.P., and E. Oaten, President Spiritualists' Union.

After a short rest the company, twenty in number, repaired to a sitting-room, where the toys, ropes, etc., were examined.

The medium was searched by the police officers and then bound to an arm-chair with rope. Then the light was turned out, and the company sang a hymn. Soon the medium was heard to breathe deeply, and when the singing ceased a fervent prayer was offered. Another hymn; then the voice of White Eagle was heard to remark that there was too much light. However, the séance continued, and soon the bells were heard and were carried by unseen hands round the room. At times three or four different toys were distinctly heard in

different parts of the room, and, at the request of the sitters, would touch the ceiling, then descend again to play on the heads of various sitters.

Several people could plainly see the toys leave the cabinet, from the light pouring in from the street lamp near the house.

At this juncture Lady Doyle was asked if she felt cold, to which she replied in the affirmative. "Then we will soon warm you," was White Eagle's rejoinder. In the space of one minute the medium's coat was thrown into her (Lady Doyle's) lap. Lights were turned on, and the police officers examined the ropes. Every knot was secure. Lights out again; then the tambourines were played and carried round the room above and on the heads of the police officers. After some very artistic imitations of a side-drum there seemed to be disorder in the cabinet, and several people saw a whatnot float into the centre of the room. This completed the phenomena; and, after singing the Doxology, the séance was declared closed.

The medium and ropes were again examined, and all present were agreed it had been a remarkable séance.

Mr. Ernest Oaten now measured the distance the coat travelled and found it to be fourteen feet.

II

ACCOUNT OF SÉANCE AT PONTLLANFRAITH

Twenty persons assembled, including a curate who was decidedly sceptical of the medium's powers. The medium was tied in a fashion which Mr. Neville Maskelyne asserts no man can free himself from. The tying was done in the centre of a commodious room, the chair and medium being carried to the desired place.

Such was the position of the medium's thumbs that the knots inflicted agonies of pain, and cushions had to be improvised in order to rest his hands.

This done, the lights were turned down, and the singing of a well-known hymn commenced the séance. Next, a fervent prayer and an exhortation to all present to keep an open mind in order to perceive the locality of the various phenomena.

Rattles, bells, tambourines, dolls, and whistles floated in the air and touched the roof, fully eleven feet high. Then the cushions supporting the medium's hands were carried to the farthest end of the room. Lights were ordered, and the ropes examined, which were found in perfect order.

Another hymn was sung, and soon a tambourine was heard accompanying the singers.

Then White Eagle asked who tied the medium's thumbs in a Chinese "thumb-rack." A gentleman in a corner of the room made answer, whereupon White Eagle said: "Here is his" (the medium's) "coat for you."

Lights were ordered again, and the coat was found on the lap of the gentleman who tied the medium.

After this, little more phenomena took place, and the rest of the séance was devoted to answering questions from the sitters.

This is the most cruel séance I have ever attended, for the medium's thumbs bore traces of the rope for several days.

The séance was brought to a close by singing the Doxology.

III

SÉANCE HELD AT PONTYPRIDD

FEBRUARY 6TH, 1919

Twenty-two sitters gathered in a small room, and after the usual inspection of toys, ropes, speaking trumpets, etc., the medium was bound and the chair carried to its place.

The cabinet was formed in a corner of the room, and

curtained a small glass cupboard. Beneath the cupboard is a drawer in which several oddments are kept.

After a hymn and a prayer the medium was soon heard to breathe deeply, which is the sign of his being entranced.

Soon the sitters nearest the cabinet were heard to say: "Thank you!" and some were heard to remark that childish hands were touching their faces. A corpulent gentleman present was the butt for several playful incidents.

This gentleman had a keyless watch in his waistcoat pocket, fastened by the ordinary swivel to a massive chain. During a lull in the proceedings the watch was heard to be wound by unseen hands. Then the gentleman exclaimed: "They have taken my watch."

The toys were in the cabinet, laid on a chess table, and these were now carried from one sitter to another right round the room. Several people confess to having kicked out, but failed to find the one who carried the dolls. The rattles played and accompanied the singers; sometimes the squeak of a doll and two joy-bells were heard at the same time.

Then a commotion was heard in the cabinet, and the metal sound of a brass gramophone horn (four feet long), placed out of curiosity in the cabinet, was heard in the centre of the room. Evidently great force was exerted in carrying this out from the cabinet.

A tambourine was now heard, and alternately on tambourine and gramophone horn an imitation of side-drums was heard, which delighted the whole of the sitters.

Soon a huge smoking pipe was deposited in the lap of the stout gentleman, and White Eagle said he had changed the watch for the pipe.

Then another commotion in the cabinet, and the chess table brought out into the centre. Next, the gramophone horn was raised, and a shrill voice shouted: "Good-night." This was a direct "spirit voice."

Light was now ordered, and the room was a litter of toys, table, chessmen, etc.

The gentleman referred to went to seek his watch and found it in a drawer, from whence came the chessmen and the pipe.

In the same gentleman's coat pocket a white tea-cup was found, which had been brought out of the glass cupboard.

The lady and gentleman next to the cabinet, and to the left of the medium, had their hands bound by a handkerchief, which was the work of the little hands felt so often during the séance.

A most remarkable séance, owing to the great variety of phenomena, was brought to a close by singing the Doxology.

IV

SÉANCE HELD AT PENKHIWCEIBE MARCH 9TH, 1919

Twelve persons sat in the kitchen of an ordinary workman's dwelling, the table having been removed for convenience and a cabinet improvised in one of the corners of the room.

Some gentlemen had brought violins and had them placed in the cabinet; there was also a box of confetti, together with toys, etc.

The meeting commenced in the usual way, and scarcely had the prayer ended when some of the sitters were touched by spirit hands, whilst others, at the same time, were flecked by the toys. Then the joy-bells rang and were heard to touch the ceiling. There were four distinct bells and rattles in various parts of the room at the same time. The two violins were next brought out of the cabinet, and were played in accompaniment to the hymn we were singing. The silence which followed was broken by the control asking if anybody present had placed a new toy in the cabinet. The new toy mentioned proved

to be a tin box, sealed and marked with a paper binding. A gentleman present had placed the box in the cabinet without the rest of the sitters being aware of it. Then we had a passage-at-arms between the control and the owner of the box as to the nature of the contents. Ultimately White Eagle said that the box contained a piece of blacklead pencil, and promised that the owner should have the lead pencil. Now the pencil was thrown to the owner, who retained it to the end of the séance.

The séance closed, and lights were ordered, when every sitter was seen to be covered in confetti; also the table was moved to the centre of the room, and the floor was a mass of toys. The violins also were deposited on the knees of sitters. Excitement ran high, and the tin box opened, when, lo and behold! the pencil was gone. The seals were intact and not one of the private marks tampered with.

This was an extraordinary test, as there was a dematerialisation either of the box or certainly of the lid in order to allow the passage of the lead pencil. Suffice it to say that a solution to this phenomenon is not yet found.

V

RECORD OF SECOND CARDIFF SÉANCE

This séance was held at Queen Street, Cardiff, and was arranged by Mr. T. E. Davies.

Fifteen people were catered for, but when the séance began twenty-seven people were found to be present.

After some preliminary incidents were satisfactorily arranged the medium changed his coat for the coat of one of the sitters. Then Will and Tom Thomas were searched and escorted to the séance room, the medium going to the chair prepared for him. Then came the question of tying, and a gentleman was ushered into the room who proved to be a local conjurer. He wanted to tie the medium in a most brutal fashion, and was refused. To this he showed marked resentment, and when asked if his

name was on the list of those invited, he replied in the negative. However, he was allowed to remain in the room. Eventually the medium was tied in a very awkward position, with his hands behind his back, by another gentleman. Part of the rope was attached to the legs of one of the sitters in order to detect the medium's possible movements.

After the usual hymn and prayer there were signs of some animation in the cabinet, and dolls, bells, tambourines, etc., were brought out to various sitters. Lights were ordered and the ropes examined. It was discovered that one of four strands tying the body over the shoulders had slackened somewhat, so I (Tom) asked some of the sitters present to tie the offending strand to one of the others. This was not done. The séance continued for a while again; and when lights were ordered to mark the close of the séance, one of the gentlemen present asked to smell the hands of the medium and told his friends that he could smell nothing. It transpired that the toys, etc., had been smeared with naphthaline or some nauseous substance. The cynics were evidently outwitted, and pandemonium ensued. The gentleman who smeared the toys had the effrontery to say that the medium must have used his teeth. It is strange that the same gentleman very carefully omitted to smell the medium's teeth. It is the hiding-place of all beaten sceptics. If something is done which positively cannot be done by sleight of hand, then the teeth play the part of accomplice. Such a trivial deduction is unworthy of schoolboys and is only trumped up to try to cast suspicion upon an honest medium. This séance was reported in the *Western Mail*, and was supposed to be duplicated the same week by the conjurer who was present. Needless to add that conjurers do not even imitate phenomena.

It was my pleasure to challenge Mr. Neville Maske-lyne's performance of the first Cardiff séance, and the conjurer who attended the second Cardiff séance had the mortification of seeing his chief refuse my reasonable

demands. So far from being afraid of magicians, I am convinced that under equal conditions the most skilled magician cannot produce or approach reproduction of spirit phenomena.

VI

SÉANCE AT HEDLGERRIG FEBRUARY 17TH, 1919

This séance was in reality a reunion of the medium's first circle members, to which number a few friends must be added, making the total present up to sixteen.

The light was barely lowered when the phenomena commenced. Toys, dolls, etc., played in all parts of the room, well out of the reach of any sitter. A gramophone horn was taken from the cabinet and a very loud (direct spirit) voice bade us "good-evening." An imitation of side-drums on the tambourine followed. Some of the sitters sang the "Marseillaise," to which the unseen hands played the accompaniment.

Then spirit hands were felt by every sitter present. One spirit was material and bold enough to walk on some of the sitters.

Now we had the pleasure of seeing an illuminated watch taken from a young man's wrist and transported to all parts of the room. Another sitter then said that there was fumbling at his pockets. The owner of the wrist watch wore pince-nez and told us that the glasses were taken from his eyes. Thereupon another sitter remarked that the glasses were in his possession. Soon the glasses were gone again.

The wrist watch was now seen to leave the cabinet, and floated near the ceiling. Hands were again felt by several sitters and a most enjoyable séance brought to a close by singing the Doxology.

Lights were ordered, the floor strewn with all kinds of "litter," including a prepared writing tablet, which had been thrown to me. Upon opening it direct writing was found, which I recognised as being that of

a friend of my boyhood days, who had passed away under extraordinary circumstances twenty years ago. I was naturally delighted.

Then a search was made for the pince-nez, wrist watch, etc. Lo and behold, the pince-nez had replaced a watch worn by another sitter, whilst the wrist watch was found in the waistcoat pocket above the watch pocket. The second watch was found in the pocket of the owner of the pince-nez and wrist watch. What was very remarkable was the fact that the pince-nez was hung on the swivel of the chain which had held watch the second.

THE MEDIUM IN THE MASK

FRANKLY I do not understand the attitude of the conjurer towards the spiritualist. It is neither logical, fair, nor honest. It lacks logic because the conjurer avers that by being able to reproduce spiritual manifestations by mechanical process he thereby disproves spiritualism ; it is not fair because the conjurer hardly ever accepts the proposition that he should repeat his pantomime under the same conditions as the spiritualist ; and it is not honest because, without such a fair investigation, the conjurer has again and again publicly branded all spiritualists as liars and frauds. From my own observation I have no hesitation in summing up the attitude of many conjurers towards the spiritualists as being one of pure jealousy. It is either that or a sense of self-advertisement at the expense of the spiritualist. If the spiritualist can produce phenomena without apparatus which the conjurer can only manage with all sorts of mechanical contraptions, it rather discounts the conjurer's efforts.

The plain fact is that there can be no comparison between conjuring and spiritualism. One neither proves nor disproves the other. Spiritualism makes no claim upon conjuring, and conjuring can make no claim upon spiritualism. It has, therefore, always been a source of wonderment to me that such eminent conjurers as Messrs. Maskelyne and Devant should have pursued spiritualists for so long. And what has been a source of greater wonderment still is the notice spiritualists take of the challenges thrown out by these conjurers. At the Cardiff séance we had a representative of Mr. Maskelyne endeavouring to prove that the Thomases

were fraudulent persons, and that he himself could reproduce on the stage the same phenomena. But the matter was taken out of his hands by Mr. Maskelyne in London. The St. George's Hall director widely advertised the fact that he could produce a conjurer who would emulate the Cardiff séance. I took the Thomases with me to see how far Mr. Maskelyne was indeed able to reproduce by conjuring what they had produced in Wales. Mr. Maskelyne's attempt was a fiasco. Prompted by me, Tom Thomas rose in the auditorium and challenged the conjurer to permit him to tie him with the rope with which his brother had been tied. This was refused. When two colleagues of mine accepted Mr. Maskelyne's invitation and went on the stage in order to tie the conjuring "medium," they were not allowed to do the tying as they wished. The conjuring effort was laughed out of court. The St. George's Hall show, even if it had been successful, would have proved nothing so far as spiritualism was concerned. Nevertheless one must admit that the possibilities of ingenious contraptions are so immense, and the opportunities in the dark so many, that it requires a very cool head and a knowledge of conjuring in order to decide definitely upon the genuineness or otherwise of psychical physical manifestations. Sceptics such as I require proof in abundance before giving away a point, and I fear I displeased many spiritualists in this attitude of calculated doubt. Therefore, when a man came forward one day and told the *Sunday Express* he was able to produce a materialised manifestation, we all put on a very grave countenance and said: "Well, show us." Then, when the man was not looking, we exchanged winks. When he had gone we said: "The man is an obvious fake; we'll expose him." But it was not so easy. The man, by a confession of his past conjuring history in connection with spiritualism, disarmed us somewhat. He said very blithely: "I have spent years performing with faked mediums all over the world in order to disprove

spiritualism. Now at last I have come across a genuine medium. I will enter her for your £500 challenge. She will produce a genuine materialised phenomenon."

"Her name?" we asked.

"No name. The lady desires to remain anonymous. Her spiritualistic friends might object to the publicity."

Very credible indeed.

"Where is she?"

"She is here. But she desires to remain masked. Come in, Miss—er—Smith." He smiled at his own inventiveness.

A tall woman, heavily veiled, entered and bowed. She spoke very little, and when she did in a quiet, nervous tone. "There must be sympathetic conditions, and I must have some believers."

Most credible indeed.

We fixed up with the medium in the mask, entering her as the first challenger for the £500 prize. It was decided that a preliminary séance should be held, and that I should go to test her powers and report on them.

The interest aroused by the Thomas séances had only served to whet the appetite of the public for more evidence for or against spiritualism, and this claim to reproduce a materialised phenomenon called forth applications for invitations from all parts of the country.

"My intention is just to prove the possibility of producing a materialised phenomenon," she told me. "I have been able to do it often before now, and I feel confident I shall be able to do it again before a committee. I claim that it is possible at the same séance not only to produce a spirit whom some of the sitters may recognise, but that I can obtain messages from those who have passed away, through the influence of any object which belonged to them while they lived on this earth. This article need not be seen by me; it can be hidden.

"Some people have brought, hidden on their persons,

letters that were once written by departed people when on earth. I can give the gist of those letters."

The séance was held at the flat of a friend of the medium's in the West Central district of London. The masked medium opened the proceedings informally with a mental, or, as other spiritualists term it, a clairaudient, manifestation. There were seven people present: the medium, the owner of the flat and his wife and her girlfriend, and two women whom I brought with me to search the medium.

The masked medium sat on the settee by the fire, and we sat round informally, while one of the women I had brought with me took a verbatim shorthand note of the proceedings. The medium first described me and my affairs—past, present, and a possible future. There was nothing extraordinary about this, beyond, perhaps, a knowledge of psychology and deduction—possibly a little clairvoyance. Her next item, however, was a trifle more unsettling. So far as I knew, she had not seen me enter the flat, and, again so far as one could possibly observe, there had been no exchange of signs between her and any member of the party. She described the great-coat I wore, which I had hung in another room, with minute accuracy, even to the unusually large number of buttons on it. This description was not all.

She told me I had three pennies in the right pocket—I had not been aware of it—and gave the correct date of each coin.

She also described an article left by one of my friends in an envelope which I had sealed and locked away in another room.

"There is the impression of heather," she said at once, and proceeded to describe the article, the photograph, and the original owner. I was not then aware of the heather, which was, indeed, at the back of the locket; but her details were all correct.

The following is Mrs. Gardiner's verbatim report of

the clairaudience, which, later on, dumbfounded the committee of investigation :—

“I am getting the impression of a careful man—‘Waste not, want not.’ I am trying to sense something about this gentleman now” (pointing to Mr. Moseley). “I feel that you are the type, if you had finished a cigarette, you would put it in your pocket rather than throw the end on a carpet and so make a mess. You would like to spare all the trouble you could to others. I think also that you are a student of the occult, and that you have written a good deal on the subject. I want this sitting to be of use to you from a business point of view—in this connection you are associated with two letters. I have got the idea of M and B. Now the picture is fading, but the M has become more distinct as the other characters disappear—the initial M is important to you in your work. Now I see Christy Minstrels. Do you know what I can see now? A large advertisement of a Moore and Burgess entertainment—now I see the picture of the Minstrels sitting in a circle—you may be connected with the Press part of the entertainment in some way. The two letters most clear are M and C. Yes, the literary connection is right and the Minstrels are right—you have some literary connection with the letters C and M.

“I get the feeling that you have been with the *Express* before—two years ago—you were approached by them two years ago, and then the negotiations broke through, but were renewed later; you have other duties as well as those in connection with the *Express*. I see you publishing a book, two it might be, but it seems to me that one anyway is dealing with this phenomenon—I think I can help you because you are up against a difficulty, I feel delay; something will delay you. Now it seems to me that you have suggested some kind of collaboration; you have gone to some firm with the same ideas and have asked them to collaborate with you—

and that firm had the similar idea of asking *you* to collaborate with them. If you are being kept waiting, I think I may be able to assist you. Would you mind telling me if this is so ? ”

Mr. Moseley : “ The cost of publication, of course, is a difficulty with all books at present.”

“ The cost of publication is not the only difficulty in the way, I am sure of that.

“ Now, something has been placed with Mr. Selbit, I know. I want to get to a distance now if I can. I am getting the idea of white heather—does that convey anything to any of you ? ”

Mrs. Gardiner : “ Yes.”

“ Thank you ! That is all I want to know. I am getting the idea now of curious writing—it can’t be Arabic—no . . . why, it seems like shorthand, and it is near the white heather. Now I am getting the idea of some one who has passed over—I can’t quite see yet . . . I am seeing now, very faintly—an old lady, a very old lady . . . She has been, I should say, a very fine-looking woman, but, as I see her now, she appears very much bent . . . she stoops . . . I see this lady now as if she were in the habit of ‘ giving ’ at the shoulders. I am passing from that now ; the picture is changing. I am getting a gentleman . . . a younger gentleman . . . he is young at least in relation to the lady . . . This gentleman may be her son . . . in relative ages (I may as well tell you that I am very bad at ages), but at any rate I am getting a motherly feeling . . . He seems to have rather a long face. I can just see his eyes. I get the idea that his eyes are light and very bright . . . I do not think that he is clean-shaven, but yet I cannot see a beard. I feel it is a moustache. This gentleman is taking me abroad . . . that is, he is taking me over the water. Has he been abroad ? ”

Mrs. Gardiner : “ Yes, that is quite right ; he has.”

“ Thank you ! I asked that because I am getting the idea of a warm climate . . . I get the idea of considerable

distance . . . I am getting the idea of the East first of all . . . I do not think that he has always been in the East. I won't say definitely that he *has* been in the East, but I get the idea of the East in connection with him."

(To Mr. Moseley): "I would like to tell you something about your hat or stick; you didn't bring them in here, did you?"

Mr. Moseley: "Tell me about my coat."

"I am going to look in the pockets of your coat—you don't mind, do you? I am going to see if I can build a picture of you as you were when you arrived, as you know I was not present. As I see you, you were wearing gloves; I am getting the idea of these gloves . . . They have no buttons . . . they are pull-on gloves. Now I am seeing a broken cigarette in your pocket, seeing it on the left side; no, no, I am looking the other way round, so it will be the right side. Do you mind if I look at your money? I see some coppers in the other pocket . . . I am counting three."

Mr. Moseley: "What colour is the coat?"

"I haven't got as far as the colour yet, sir. Colours are very difficult, of course. It is fading . . . I am seeing it now, and it looks to me like a black coat . . . I think it is smooth anyway . . . The dates on the pennies are worrying me . . . all three, it seems to me, are of this century. I am touching one of these pennies; it is 1890 . . . one and eight make nine, and then a nine, and then a nought—will you remember nine? Now I get the date that we all remember, the date that war started, 1914; the other date looks like 1910; no, 1902, I think. I get the idea from this that nine is your dominant number. I want you to remember nine, because you may find that it connects with something in your business."

Mr. Moseley: "Is there anything peculiar about the coat?"

"Anything peculiar? I think that it is double-

breasted, it has six buttons on either side, and I get the impression that it is more like a lady's coat. It has a curious tab with buttons."

Mr. Moseley : "Whereabouts ?"

"Wait a minute; it is fading now. I can't see where that tab is, it has gone from my mind, and the whole picture has become shiny."

As a fact, what I wanted to get at was whether by clairvoyant powers she could have seen that same coat on me a few months previously, when I was in the uniform of a naval officer. But she was unable to do this, and although I admit I was puzzled, I felt that there was not very much in it.

It was the events that followed that produced a complete silence in the sceptic. First of all, I was asked to adjust some dark curtains at the back and side of the walls in order to form a contrasting background for the spiritual phenomena. I took care to see that the window at the end of the room was firmly fastened.

Our party having been reported all present, I closed the door and sealed it with ordinary stamp paper, upon which, however, I had first scribbled my signature. The masked medium took her place on a chair in the centre of the darkened part of the room, two yards from the black curtain. The piano had been placed in the opposite corner of the room, a small lighted lamp throwing its rays on the music. Wedged into this corner were the two women-friends of the medium, their exit being barred by our settee, which my two friends and I occupied. On the left of the settee, immediately in front of the piano, were the medium's friends and champion, who was master of ceremonies.

In front of us was a table, which, on later reflection, I felt should have been removed. It did not, however, in any degree obstruct our view of the medium. She remained seated in order, it was explained, to obtain a state of mental passivity.

I had been invited to tie the medium, and, in addition, had secured her feet and hands with stamp paper, also autographed by me. The slightest movement on her part would have torn the paper.

The lights were then put out—the only glimmer being from the flickering lamp by the piano. In the darkness the white form of the medium stood out with weird prominence against the background of pitch blackness. If you strained to see, a kind of white vapour soon emanated from the outlines of the white figure of the medium. But the sensible thing to do was not to strain to see.

The medium, by coughing and sighing, indicated that she was partly under control, and presently some rather terrifying moaning was followed by an uncanny silence.

“I see a figure,” she broke the silence with, and went on to describe a spirit woman, “who has never been here before, and who must come to see some one who has come here to-night.”

The age, the comparative date of passing over, and the illness from which the departed woman suffered were given minutely, and then the medium murmured, apparently to some other spirit who was interposing: “Go away, friend! No, you’re not wanted. Go away!” Upon which the interloper must have regretfully gone, for in a minute the masked medium was able to continue her description of departed spirits who were hovering around, seen by her, but quite unseen by us. All of a sudden another dead silence, and the woman on my right moved nervously.

“Play—play again,” the medium murmured, and the pianist gave us one more rendering of a hymn which we came to know quite well before the evening was through. Another tussle with the interfering spirit, who, it was afterwards explained, desired to manifest himself through her mediumship, and another recital of the hymn which so appealed to the medium, followed.

Then, without any warning, a great beam of light lit up the end of the curtained wall. It was of a beauti-

ful brilliance, but faded away as suddenly as it had appeared.

Then another light, wan and cloudy, seemed to emanate from the back of the medium. It hung, first of all, just above her head, a thin curl of cloud, and then grew in size and contour till it resembled an aged woman in a shawl. It remained for a few seconds stationary, and then glided to the side of the medium.

I leaned forward and tried to make out any details of this apparition, but beyond the outlines nothing was discernible. Now and then the figure seemed to grow in brilliance, and at one time looked as if it were coming towards us, but it turned, and remained all the time in the vicinity of the medium and the black curtains.

The more closely one looked, the stranger became the form of this ghostly-looking light. Now it seemed as if it were a woman carrying a child, then as a woman bent with age, and finally just as a beacon of light. Whatever it was, it moved freely about from one side of the room to the other.

The light gradually paled and became smaller, until it was no bigger than the head of a child, and moving towards the curtain in the direction of the door, it disappeared. There was a long silence, followed by the stertorous breathing of the medium.

"Why is there no light?" she murmured. The electric lamps were switched on, and we beheld the medium trembling as if in a palsy. On her lap were numerous sweet-smelling violets, scattered about.

"They always leave me flowers," she explained. I should add that we were not asked to form a circle or hold hands, as is usual at such séances. This is, of course, more comfortable, but, on the other hand, gives greater freedom to any possible accomplices.

That was how I left the matter for the time being. My two women-friends and I decided that night that the issue was "not proven." In the first place, they might easily have seen my coat and "dipped" into the pockets

before the séance began, and, in the second instance, a well-manipulated lighting effect might easily produce the etherealisation we saw. Also, when the ghost was in full view, I had searched around for the medium's champion and found him groping on the floor. He was "looking for something," he lamely explained.

At any rate, it served as a good preliminary investigation, and it now remained for me to say whether it was worth while for the expert committee to examine the powers of the medium the following week.

Well, I thought it was worth while.

AN AMAZING SEQUEL

BEFORE giving my colleague Mr. Townley's account of the actual test and of the amazing interview I had next day with Mr. Selbit, who was responsible for the séances, I will give briefly a comparison between the preliminary séance (which I have described in the previous chapter), at which I was a committee of one, and the final séance, at which a special committee was present, which included Lady Glenconner, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Sir Henry Lunn, Dr. Wynn Westcott, the coroner, Superintendent Thomas, of Scotland Yard, Mr. Gow, editor of *Light*, Mr. Ralph Shirley, of the *Occult Review*, and others.

Briefly, the proceedings were almost identical with those I had attended on the previous Friday night, with the exception that there was a mixed crowd and, therefore, mixed influences, which made it more difficult for the medium. There were present, in addition to those mentioned, about a dozen others, making about twenty altogether.

The audience was invited to place in a bag of black cloth and box articles that once belonged to deceased people, and also articles belonging to the living relatives of persons present. The box was like a cash-box, made of tin, about six by four inches. Nearly everybody present offered an article of some sort—a letter, ring, or watch, for example—and a sealed packet was put in. There was also a fountain pen placed by Sir Henry Lunn.

After some preliminary remarks by the medium's champion, Mr. Selbit, who recited the conditions of the test, the medium was brought in, wearing a veil after the style of a yashmak. She asked the indulgence of the audience because the conditions were different from



MR. P. T. SEIBIT, ILLUSIONIST.

those under which she had sat a few nights ago, and said she would attempt to give some particulars of the articles that had been placed in the box. Her first attempts appeared to be rather an ordeal ; she was nervous and did not seem able to get in touch with the conditions. By-and-by she apparently caught hold of a clue, which she followed up with amazing rapidity. To everybody's astonishment, she was able to read two words in the specially sealed packet, which she said were not German, but camouflaged. The words in fact were "Liebe Ober-intellect." The owner of the letter declared at once that they were correct, and that he was quite satisfied.

The medium next stated that she saw a swan, but she was puzzled because she said it was black and was carried about in the pocket every day. At last, to her own amusement, she said it was a Swan fountain pen. It belonged to Sir Henry Lunn, and had been placed in the box.

The third article was a ring that had belonged to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's son, now passed over. The medium gave the initials on it correctly, and Sir Arthur said the engraving of these initials was now so faded and worn that they could only be discerned by a close inspection in a good light.

The fourth endeavour was made in regard to a letter. The medium described the district in which the writer lived, and eventually gave the name of the writer and the street number of the house. The owner of the letter declared these to be correct.

During this manifestation the medium said she observed the form of a man who was very persistent and desired to be described by her. She first got the name of Murphy and then Button. Nobody recognised the names, but Lady Glenconner appeared to recognise the form described and another name used in the same connection. However, the next point of the medium established a clue to the mysterious names. She described the form as being in great pain, and pointing

to the pit of the stomach, declared that there had been an operation, for she now observed an operating theatre with a table and doctors. She asked: "Is Murphy Button not recognised by any of the medical gentlemen present?" To the general surprise, Dr. Edwin Smith declared that Murphy's button was a term used in surgery and related to an operation in connection with the abdomen. The medium said the operation had in this case been a failure and had resulted in the death of the man now appearing as a spirit. Unfortunately no one present was quite sure of his acquaintance.

Other articles were minutely described by the medium, and the owners admitted the correctness in each case. This psychometrical demonstration was undoubtedly successful. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle said it was extremely clever, and Lady Glenconner said it was very convincing. Others in the room said it was due to telepathy. A sceptic said the box had been exchanged for a duplicate in a momentary interval between the collection of the articles and the appearance of the medium, and that she had thus had sufficient time to become acquainted with the contents of the box.

The medium then left the room to be searched by Lady Glenconner and another lady. On her return she was securely tied to a chair by a committee of three gentlemen selected. The door was sealed, and the lights were turned down, leaving only one shaded lamp showing a light. One of the window blinds near the piano was sufficiently lifted to show the keyboard. The light was so clear as to enable the sitters to see each other. The sitters continued to converse, and the medium asked for silence. Thereafter there were symptoms of her going under control, and in a short time the same kind of efflorescent form I had observed a few nights previously made its appearance from behind the medium, then curling up perpendicularly and gradually assuming the outline of an aged woman. The figure seemed to move from the right to the left of the medium and then,

raising itself on a horizontal plane, floated about for a few seconds to a distance of about two yards from the medium.

Despite all this, the *Express* was still sceptical. It printed the following account with the heading of "A Spirit or a Conjuring Trick?" with a sub-heading of "How 'the Ghost' was raised." (We shall soon see how far the scepticism was justified.) Its account was as follows:

Within a stone's throw of Oxford Street, in a silent room on a second floor, a group of serious men and women sat with eyes, ears, and minds concentrated on strange phenomena which were either produced by telepathy, or clairvoyance, or spiritualism, or by conjuring which defied detection.

The séance room was an ordinary apartment, about twenty or twenty-two feet long and less in width. There were four windows, and these were examined before being latched and sealed with paper strips. The carpet where the medium was to sit was lifted, and the floor was tested for trap-doors or electric wires, and there appeared to be none. The carpet was turned down again and the medium's chair placed on it.

The walls and ceiling appeared to be of ordinary solidity. There were two ordinary electric lights, one hanging just in front of the medium's chair at the usual height and the other nearer the other end of the room.

There were also two small dull red lanterns, giving so little light that a few yards from the medium one could only just see a dim form after gazing steadily through the darkness for a quarter of an hour. Frequent glances at the lanterns failed to detect any change in their appearance, even for the fraction of a second. There was no sign that they were used as a Morse code signalling apparatus.

The members of the *Sunday Express* committee,

numbering fewer than a score, sat in a body at one end of the room on chairs. The committee included convinced spiritualists, candid scoffers, and persons prepared to admit that they were convinced if the evidence seemed reasonable and sufficient.

It was an interesting assortment of people: Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, as tall and hefty and blue-eyed as a Royal Irish constabularyman; Mr. Gow, his fellow-spiritualist, at the other end of the physical category, short, slim, and slight; Dr. Wynn Westcott, the silver-haired coroner; Lady Glenconner, a *grande dame* of gracious aspect and manner; Superintendent Thomas, steady, observant, and critical, as becoming one of the heads of the C.I.D., of Scotland Yard; Sir Henry Lunn, portly, smiling, and business-like; Dr. Edwin Smith, tall and grave-eyed, with the reserved, serious manner of a scientific student of research; Mr. Stuart Cumberland, quizzical and sceptical. Behind the committee, in the corner near the end window, was a pianoforte on which a woman played while the ghost was being produced.

The first part of the séance took place with the lights up. This was the "mental" test—thought-reading, or clairvoyance, or whatever the sitters liked to call it.

The masked medium's agent showed the sitters a black box, which would hold about fifty cigars. There was no trick about the box. It had a lid which closed in the usual way. In it was a small black silk bag. The box and bag were handed to the committee for inspection, and every one was satisfied with them. The spectators were asked to place in the bag or the box articles associated with persons who are dead.

A number of articles were placed in the box and bag. As there were not enough articles associated with persons who had "passed over," some things connected with living, but absent, persons were also handed in. Those connected with the dead were placed in the bag, which was put into the box, and the rest merely in the box. The box was then closed.

The agent took it, went to the door, and summoned the masked medium, who entered and took her place in the chair facing the members of the circle.

Every one was keen to see this mysterious masked woman, whose name none knew. She is young, with black hair, dark gleaming eyes, and a slight figure. She wore an ordinary white silk evening dress, but no gloves. The only curious feature was the mask, or veil, which hung round the lower half of her face, just beneath her eyes, and drooped in a kind of net beneath her chin.

The agent handed the box to her and told her about the black bag and the way in which the articles had been divided, and, at the suggestion of the committee, took a seat at the back of the room, in the last row of the onlookers. He held no conversation with the medium, who was left to her own devices so far as those facing her could see.

Her chair was in the centre of the end of the room, and there was nothing near her. The wall behind her, and at her right and left, was hung with a thin green cotton curtain, merely as a cover to the white wallpaper. This was done in the presence of the sitters before the business began.

The masked medium sat silent for a time holding the black bag in her hands on her lap. Occasionally she put one hand on her eyes, and after a while she asked that the light in front of her might be switched off. This was done. The other large electric lamp gave plenty of light.

Soon this strange young woman with the lustrous black eyes began to talk in short phrases and sentences. Although there was something suggesting Spain, or perhaps the East, in her black hair and eyes, she spoke in pure English.

"I see a man—in khaki. I see a name—Jack—Jack—Jack—Jackson," she said. This name led to nothing. A little later she "saw" the name "Hugh." This was the name of one of the members of the committee and

of the *Sunday Express* staff, who had placed in the bag a letter written to him by a soldier-friend reported missing several months ago. The letter was inside a thick blue cover, which was enclosed in an envelope, sealed with wax, and stamped with a private device. It was inside the closed box.

"I see—I see," continued the medium, as if she saw the objects in the air before her, "I see machinery—cotton mills, something suggesting machinery in cotton mills—in the north—Yorkshire."

She "saw" that the mills were at Halifax, which was, in fact, the home town of the writer of the letter. This was remarkable enough for a beginning, but the masked medium went on to something that seemed much more wonderful. She began to "see" words in the letter. She confessed they puzzled her. At first she could not make anything of them. Then she "saw" they were German, but not real German—German written in jocular mood. She "saw" the word "Ober-intellect."

"Is that right?" she asked.

"Yes, quite right," acknowledged the person to whom the letter belonged.

The opening sentence of the letter which had puzzled the medium runs:—

"Liebe Ober-intellect, ich habe until January 10 ein extension gewangled."

How did the masked medium "see" the name Halifax and the word "Ober-intellect" in a sealed envelope, inside a bag, inside a box? Every sitter was puzzled.

The next thing she saw was Edgware Road; then a turning off Edgware Road, a red building, a house, the number of which she gave.

"I am trying to get the name," she went on. "Mark—Mark—Marks? Is it Marks?"

"Yes," said another member of the committee, who had placed in the box a letter from a friend named Marks, who lived in the house described.

Having "seen" the surname, the masked medium soon saw the first name—Louis. She was right.

The medium romped through a career of triumph on triumph.

She described a medal which belonged to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's dead son; a broken bit of a stud which Mr. Stuart Cumberland had placed in the box; a small medallion belonging to Dr. Wynn Westcott, bearing triangles and his initials, "W. W. W.," and the initials—"Q.S.N."—of a motto of an "occult" society, known as the Rosicrucians, of which Dr. Westcott is a leading member. These triangles and initials she "saw" correctly.

She saw somebody's crooked sixpence, and a bit of something suggesting a "violent explosion" (it was a piece of Zeppelin metal), and "something from some one who has been a long time concerned with spiritualism—something small—a visiting card—Mr. Gow's visiting card."

"Yes, quite right," said Mr. David Gow, whose card was inside the box.

There was one thing which really did puzzle the masked medium, or which she, at any rate, seemed to boggle over. One was a fountain pen. She "saw" a swan, then "something black," and a swan, and "something connected with correspondence." She did not see that it was a Swan fountain pen.

So ended the first part of the séance. Was it conjuring, or reading the minds of the persons in the room, or "seeing" the articles which were seemingly hidden?

Before the ghost was raised the medium was searched by Lady Glenconner and another woman-member of the committee, who vouched that she had nothing concealed in her clothing. Later she was securely bound to her chair with surgical bandages and cords, which Superintendent Thomas sealed with sealing-wax. There was no doubt about the thoroughness with which she was bound.

The two bright lights were switched off, and the only light of any kind was the extremely faint suggestion of a glow from the two little red lamps, which were near each other, above the heads of the sitters and in one corner of the room, to the left of the medium, but at the opposite end of the room. At first, looking towards the medium, one could see nothing. It was only when the eyes became quite used to the darkness that one could make out the almost invisible patch of something less than black where the medium was sitting. It was impossible to identify it as anything but a vague modification of blackness.

The pianist now played romantic music. Minutes passed without incident. Then came some sound, as of heavy breathing, and again silence. At last

the ghost began to walk. It came as a kind of pillar or wide stripe of thin vapour, as thin and impalpable as a breath of mist vanishing into the blue of a summer sky.

It was like the patch of light which children by catching the rays of the sun with a piece of looking-glass thrown on a wall, but it was very faint.

It originated at the right side of the medium—at the left from the point of view of the onlookers—and was about as tall as the medium when standing.

It was off the floor, and, still upright, it slowly passed across the darkness until it seemed to reach the wall. Then it moved back again, but gradually became horizontal, passed over the medium's head in that position, and, after approaching the other wall, drooped down, curled up into a dim ball, gradually became smaller as it neared the door, and so dwindled and vanished.

The music continued all the time. After the ghost had vanished there were again sounds of heavy breathing from the medium. These ceased, and after an interval the medium consented to the lights being switched on.

It was now seen that the masked medium, although

bound securely to the chair, had succeeded in turning it so that she almost faced the door at her left. The seals and bandages were intact, and so was the seal which had been placed on the door.

The masked medium's agent had occupied the same place in the back row of the circle. The front row of sitters held hands during the darkness, so that no one could pass between them.

What was the ghost? Was it a spirit, or was it the production of some surpassingly clever conjuring trick? If it was a trick, no one present was able to detect the means by which it was performed.

The first part of the proceedings baffled everybody present. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was at first impressed. He said to me:

"She was able to tell me the initials on the ring of my boy—who died some months ago—although the average person examining it would perhaps make nothing of it. It was so worn that it would be excusable if you could not make anything of it even if you had the ring before you.

"So far as the second part of the programme is concerned, that is a different matter. Before a decision can be made one must attend several séances with the same medium. One certainly saw a floating light. But although I was sitting in the front row, and was quite close to it, I could not make anything of it.

"I should have to see it again before passing a definite opinion on it. In any case, I think the proceedings were instructive and clever. But I have my doubts about the whole thing."

Mr. Ralph Shirley, editor of the *Occult Review*, was most impressed with the clairvoyant gifts of the medium. He told me that he thought, however, "the floating cloud was not enough to convince the sceptic."

Lady Glenconner thought the medium fully succeeded in satisfying the test. "What we have seen have been

the initial stages of a materialisation. I have seen much fuller manifestations, in which one could distinguish the features and form, but that was not under the same test conditions as were in effect at this latest séance, so that this has a higher value.

"The medium is possessed of remarkable powers, and she deserves and has our gratitude for placing them before this circle of investigators in so generous a manner."

Sir Henry S. Lunn said: "It is clear that the medium has the telepathic gift of discovering the contents of the box. She certainly could not have seen by ordinary means the sealed letter which began with the dog-German 'Liebe Ober-intellect' and her description of the Rosicrucian occult badge was also very remarkable.

"With regard to the alleged materialisation, I do not believe there was any spiritual influence in the matter at all. It was probably the play of some unknown natural forces which may be discovered ultimately as the result of these investigations."

Mr. Stuart Cumberland was, it is due to him to say, as sceptical as ever, but he gave the wrong clue to the mystery. So did Dr. Edwin Smith. Another of those who were convinced that the entire proceedings were fraudulent was Mr. J. B. Wilson. Mr. Gow, however, thought the first part of the séance "very remarkable."

The "Masked Medium" gave several public performances which baffled everybody who saw them. The London Press did not know what to make of it.

And now comes the astonishing sequel which solves the mystery. I called on Mr. Selbit one day on another matter, *and in half an hour had obtained from him a complete confession of the mechanical nature of the manifestations.* He was quiet and matter-of-fact.

I said: "Of course I could see through the whole thing."

He stared and smiled wanly.

"Will you tell me," I said, returning his gaze, "that the thing was engineered?"

He hesitated a bit.

"Yes . . . it was engineered," he returned quietly.

"Well, then," I replied at once, "it was the most ingenious illusion I have ever seen. It certainly enhances your reputation as a conjurer."

He beamed.

"And so," I said, following up this advantage, "the first part of the proceedings was worked too, eh?"

"Yes . . . but not in the way you imagine."

"Tell me. It is extraordinary."

Another pause.

"I will tell you—in confidence."

And he told me the simple explanation that completely took in everybody who witnessed it. Oh, I knew there were sceptics, but they were sceptics by nature and not from observation. For none of them gave the slightest idea of what actually did happen. . . . As I am bound to confidence, I cannot tell the secret, but I can say this: that the box containing the articles gathered in from the audience was *removed from the room during the séance*, and that the medium was holding a substituted box while the original box containing the articles was being rifled in another room, *and the contents were being communicated to her in our presence point by point*.

A very ingenious man, is this Mr. Selbit.

"And the ghost?" I pressed him.

He smiled, and I went on to indicate that I had noticed an exact similarity in the movement of the "ghost" both at the preliminary test and the final séances.

"That is a very good point," he conceded.

The "ghost" had in fact emanated from the back of the medium's chair, walked to her left, then to her right, disappearing near the door at the preliminary séance, at which I was the sole investigator, and the second séance, at which the committee attended.

"The ghost was a real live person of this planet?" I hazarded.

"Yes," he smiled.

"Tell me," I ventured.

No, he could not tell me that, for he was going to exploit this secret further. But he could tell me this: *by no trapdoors, but by some means of which he held the secret, somebody did enter the room, change the box, and act the ghost.*

"I could train any chorus-girl to be the medium in ten minutes," he added. "In fact, I hadn't arranged for the medium when I rang you up and accepted your challenge."

I asked how she managed to guess one or two particulars of my private life; and he now told me that he had obtained information through a well-known monthly journal, which must have given the particulars unconscious of the manner in which they would be used. He also laughingly informed me that he was preparing for another victim by obtaining intimate particulars concerning him from the intended victim's own "private" secretary.

The "mystery" of "Murphy's button" was explained by the fact that the medium was coached in the details of the death of a member of the *Express* staff.

And then this wonderful illusionist showed me a table which he had bought from a "medium" in America. It looked an ordinary dining-room table—a trifle worn; but when he lifted part of the top a layer of electric batteries was revealed!

"You place a typewriter on this table," he explained casually, "and credulous people ask it a question. *And it typewrites an intelligent answer . . .* Only it is not done by supernatural means. Somebody in another room is tapping the answer on keys that are electrically connected with these!"

I felt I had been "had" a bit.

"Oh, I could show you other things that would make

you stare. Why, if I had a room fitted up—why, I'd drive credulous people stark staring mad."

And I believe this wizard would!

"Still," I concluded, "your mechanical contrivances only explain fraud, not spiritualism."

"Oh," he hastens to say, "I think there is genuine spiritual manifestation. I myself have not been convinced, but my wife has had very convincing experiences."

And Mrs. Selbit, a young and charming woman, who is hand-in-glove with her husband in his clever performance, tells me of her faith in spiritualism and of her unaccountable manifestation with the medium J. g. Vango.

"If you could recommend me to a materialised medium I should be grateful," she says to me.

And that is the whole remarkable story.

“ WHITEY ”

I CALLED one afternoon at Mr. Lewis' office in Regent Street. He was just about to telegraph an appointment for me to meet Craddock, the medium. There was a striking and artistic-looking man in the office—bald on top, with an abundance of hair at the back of his head. Mr. Lewis asked him to excuse us for a few minutes, and so the tanned, pleasant-looking man went into an ante-room while Mr. Lewis and I talked on private affairs. In the course of our conversation he asked me if I had met “Whitey.”

“Whitey—who's he?” I couldn't help ejaculating.

“Of course, I forgot. He is the spirit control of Mr. Foster.”

“And who is Mr. Foster?” I asked.

“The man who was in here just now. Whitey is the short for White Wing—a North American Indian. He prefers to be called Whitey . . . He is a healing spirit.”

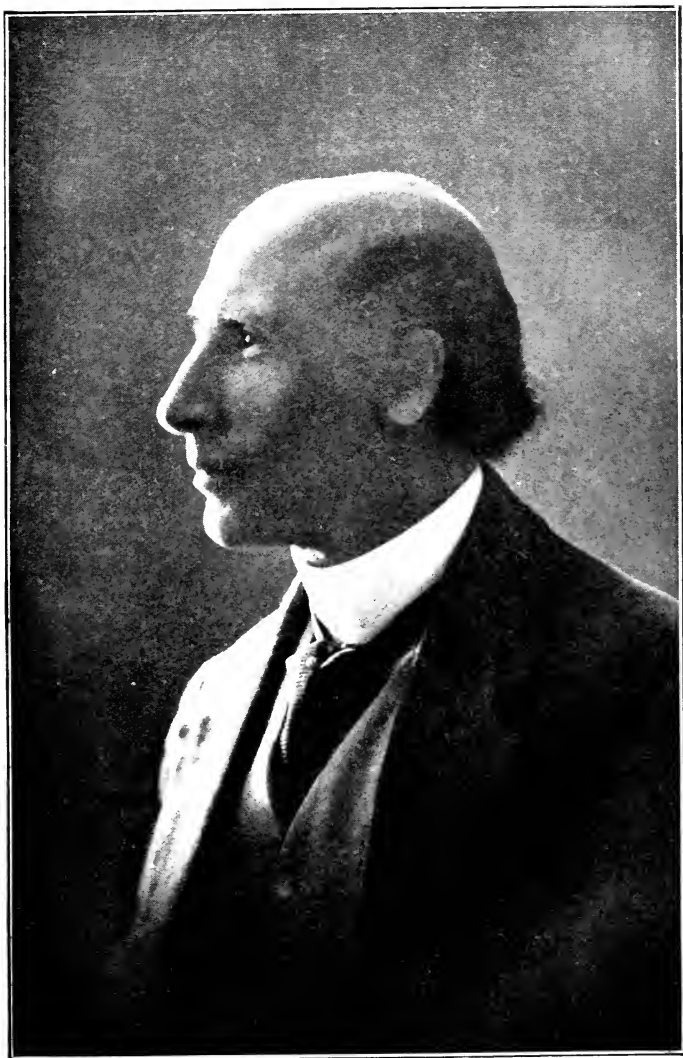
I smiled.

“Oh . . . have you half an hour to spare? I'll call Mr. Foster in.”

I said politely I would be charmed to meet him and prepared myself for an exposition of another phase of spiritualism. I had no idea that Mr. Lewis intended that we should have there and then another séance. Here in this Regent Street office the idea seemed so absurd.

“Oh, you'll like having a talk with Whitey,” said Mr. Lewis as he corrected some proofs.

Mr. Foster came in—bright, keen, and healthy-looking. He agreed to introduce me to Whitey in much the same manner as I would offer to show my library. Mr. Foster,



"WHITEY'S" MEDIUM: MR. W. E. FOSTER.

it seems, was a Wesleyan Methodist preacher, and his last sermon—the most successful of all—was delivered against spiritualism. He was a thorough sceptic. Eventually he was made to go to a séance, and on the second occasion he felt himself going into a trance. “I thought it was the atmosphere,” he explained to me, “and I tried to throw off the drowsiness. I couldn’t, however, and I was amazed to hear of my antics afterwards. I had jumped over tables and chairs, yelled wildly, and performed Indian dances. Clairvoyants described a North American Indian hovering round me. After that I went to five different mediums, and each described the same Indian spirit control——”

“That,” broke in Mr. Lewis, “was the introduction of Whitey.”

“He couldn’t speak a word of our tongue then,” continued Mr. Foster, “but made himself fairly clear, through my mediumship, by gesticulations and grunts. In a month or so he became reconciled to the use of the foreign tongue, and told me he had been to the spirit school.”

After these conversational preliminaries Mr. Foster made himself comfortable in a chair facing me, Mr. Lewis pulled down the blind to keep out the glare of an unexpected outburst of sunshine, and switched on the electric light, and I sat back freely and watched—not without a consciousness of the incongruity of the situation.

Mr. Foster “got into touch” with as much ease as we get into telephonic communication—perhaps less! A few frightfully jerky movements that threatened to dislocate his neck, some facial contortions—the mouth forming as a child’s does in playful petulance, and—*voilà* Whitey!

He turns at once to Mr. Lewis and greets him. “Whitey’s old man . . . bent . . . Whitey not bent, no!” He slaps his chest with a resounding crash. Then he peers over to me. Whitey “takes” to me; he holds out his hand and says rather coyly he is glad

to meet me. Then he goes on, always in childish tones and with a sudden outburst of gleeful egotism: "Whitey strong, very strong, stronger than dear old man!" (turning to the half-bowed figure of Mr. Lewis). Then he delivers the following message to me:

"Whitey sees in front of you a great white heaving vastness, rolling and rolling and rolling and rolling, and there is nothing to be seen on it, no ship, no anything, no nothing. And right at the far end there is a great brilliancy like a sun, and it shows from that to you a pathway of rippling, golden, moving splendour, and in that track across the heaving vastness of greatness, of great undiscoveredness, there be that great line of light to you. And you follow that line of light, and you go in the beams of that light, and as you go straight to that line which draws you, which pulls you, and you fling out on all sides of you little sparks like unto that great brilliant sun, and as you fling them across the darkness to the other sides of the line of life, so the mariners that had lost their clue in darkness and despair see these lights, and they lift up their downcast heads, and their weary hearts become light, and they turn the nose of their boats, as you are doing, to the great big sun of beauty because of these sparks you throw out in the darkness, which you catch from the great big sun that calls you, and they lift up their heads, and they go straight into the path of life, and they rejoice, and you too rejoice. That will be so, and you will be full of joy-ness.

"See?" he exclaims as he finishes the message, rises from his chair impulsively, and talks again. He says "oo" for "you" and "dat" for "that," and is almost joyous in his attempts to pronounce big words. Whitey whispers it is the "great Spirit" (he comes over to me and places his head to my ear) "which you call God—He does the healing through Whitey. *He* matters . . . Whitey doesn't." But nevertheless the late American Indian proceeds to tell more about himself and how **very**

strong he is—he illustrates that by giving himself (or rather his unsuspecting medium) a terrific swipe on the cheek—how he cured a case of deafness—a mother who had not heard her children speak for thirty-five years, also a friend of the “ nice old man ” who the doctor said was suffering from cancer which would necessitate an immediate operation. Oh, Whitey cured her in a sitting. (This, by the way, is borne out by Mr. Lewis.) Whitey also claims a champion in a certain army officer whom he cured after the earthly doctors had failed.

Whitey goes back to his chair, which he finds with a little difficulty, and says suddenly: “ Talk to Whitey. Ask him questions.”

And so I ask him whether he still remembers his own native language, upon which he says with childish simplicity: “ Want to hear Whitey sing ? ” And when I tell him what a pleasure it will be, he jumps up, and making an invocation in a strange language, begins with panther-like movements the uttering of the American Indian. Up and down he treads, trekking a weird yell and then going to crescendo till he is just whispering the words with an unmistakable impressiveness. He explains afterwards that it is the song of the plains.

“ You know ‘ Hiawatha ’ ? ” he asks earnestly. “ Well, it is in dat.”

Whitey goes to any amount of pains to explain. “ In the morning,” he says—“ morning, you know—follows night—you must take—now Whitey will tell—every morning you take an orange and squeeze it—like so—and you take everything away—except the juice. You drink the juice—you see ? ”

Whitey has asked for some possession of mine, and I hand him my left-hand glove. He repeats as he puts it on, “ Left! right!” and feeling inside the glove, tells me my ills . . . of which the juice of oranges provides the panacea. Then he comes over to me and feels my bumps. What he says is unbecoming for a modest man to record. There is no brilliance about this Indian, and

although it were odious to make comparisons between spirits, I think White Eagle—who used the Thomas medium—shines the greater, although I hasten to add that the latter lacks the healing power of Whitey and has never exhibited or claimed abnormal strength. Whitey hears that I have a cold, and he is fervently eager to relieve it. By rubbing his hands together vigorously, the friction producing considerable heat, and by placing the hands over the bridge of my nose, he naturally gives a momentary relief. “That is better, isn’t he?” he asks with such childish anxiety that I have no hesitation in saying I am almost cured.

Mr. Lewis—who has known this medium for some years—vouches for him. I told him that the disease of scepticism was difficult to cure, and that it might be possible for a “medium” with assiduous training to mimic almost anybody. He agrees, but points out that Mr. Foster has no knowledge whatever of Red Indians, and that when he knew him before he took up spiritualism he was a profound sceptic.

A RECORD OF FORTY SÉANCES

I HAVE had the opportunity of examining the records of no fewer than forty materialising séances at which the Thomas brothers and most of the leading spiritualists in Wales attended. The records, which have been compiled by Mr. T. J. Thomas, date back from 1910. The circle was composed of four women and seven men. The medium was a man extremely well known in South Wales, whose name I have been asked not to mention.

The manner of the formation of this circle was new to me, and, I am sure, will be of interest to the lay reader. For instance, "we were put into our permanent positions by the medium."

This done, "we sat for a few moments in silence, and then the conductor led the singing of 'Come, let us join and sing,' after which one of the controls opened with a prayer which was of a gloriously uplifting character. We then sang 'When peace, like a river.' Next there came a series of controls exhorting us to think deeply of our object in meeting. Our control 'Simpa Passi' told us it was essential for the perfecting of conditions, and the whole of the sitters agreed to abstain from food for two hours before the time of sitting. I was the subject of doubt by this control. He seemed to think I would not comply with his request. Next came Abdullah, reminding us of his promise to bring a live creature from his native soil, after which the meeting closed with the Doxology."

At the second séance "Abdullah used the medium's body in such a manner that I thought he was rather rough. A definite promise from Abdullah that he would bring the living creature into the room within six weeks."

At the third séance several controls came, including Tim, Ethel, W. Stevens, Abdullah, Mary, and John. "We all saw vapour rising from the side of the medium, who was in full length on the floor. We also saw distinctly bright lights on the cabinet. Then Ethel in her childish way exhorted us to patience. Tim spoke a few words in his own inimitable style and then made way for W. Stevens and John, who bewailed the fact that he was still a materialist. Then came Mary, whose mannerisms evoked hearty laughter from all present. She offered the Benediction, after which the Doxology was sung to terminate the proceedings. Time, 9.20."

At séance 4 the medium was late in coming, and "Abdullah gave us to understand that punctuality was as essential as singing and praying." He "placed the medium on the floor, from whence a cloudy vapour seemed to emblazon the cabinet. . . . The voice of Dolly was plainly heard."

At the next sitting the control Abdullah again reminded the circle that a fortnight or three weeks would see them fulfil a two-year-old promise. He "told us that before long we would have great manifestations. It was for us to give conditions." Having our assurance that we would try, he left. Then came Fakka Chief, "who told us he would bring the living creature from his native place."

An attempt was made by a spirit to show her face, but only "luminous spots" resulted.

"Tim came, and, with his philosophic quaintness, told us to take heart, for all was well. He amuses the circle by his chaffing and debating with the writer. Tim went, and a person named John Lloyd came. This friend promised to prove his identity by producing a facsimile of his handwriting through the instrumentality of the medium. He deplored the state of his former existence and hoped that the young members of the circle would take a lesson from him."

At another séance the medium was controlled by a

well-known character, who wanted to take the medium into the cabinet. "We declined his request. He was well known as Roderic. We sang a hymn; and Abdullah, in his usual profound tones, gave out that we were sure of having what he had promised during the next séance, probably at the start. He deplored the fact that the weather was so changeable and the atmosphere so detrimental to great progress. He told us to take every precaution at the next séance, for, like ourselves, he wanted fair play and satisfactory results."

I think it will be more striking to give a summarised version of these significant séances in the language of the recorder:—

Séance 8. A number of the sitters gathered early to inspect the séance room. Our conductor searched the room and asked the writer to take charge of the medium while he saw that the two corner men were searched. Before the medium came, however, we all searched the séance room to our entire satisfaction; then we had Mr. H. and Mr. R. searched. It was past 8 o'clock, and the medium had not come. We were afraid that disappointment awaited us. At 8.15, however, he came all of a tremble and asked for a few minutes' grace, which, of course, was allowed him. The writer and some others then proceeded to search the medium, by the way for the first time during our séances, and after emptying his pockets of money, watch, handkerchief, and other articles, taking care to examine his clothes and shoes, he was brought between two of the searchers in Indian file to his chair in the séance room. It was noticeable, however, that he was much agitated by being under the influence of his controls. Directly he was in his chair Abdullah came and told us that he was sure to fulfil his promise, and asked Mr. P. to open the meeting through prayer. Abdullah now asked us to sing something brisk, which we did. We sang "I hear the angels singing," and we noticed the medium throbbing con-

vulsively. Suddenly Abdullah cried out: "Got it!" and asked us to guess what it was they had brought us. Several guesses were made, but no one had guessed aright. Mr. H. was told to look for it. Inside the cabinet and three feet from the head of our medium was a beautiful tortoise. Abdullah told us that we could examine it each one in turn. The joy of schoolchildren when breaking school for the holidays is the nearest comparison I can make to the conduct of the sage, philosophic Abdullah. He laughed aloud, and I may say that I have known him for some years now, but have never before seen him expressing a smile or heard him laugh. How he upbraided the children for trying to hide the creature. The circle was naturally surprised, and so we closed the meeting with the Doxology. When our medium came to himself we showed him the tortoise. "Good God!" said he, "it's alive. How ever did they do it?" Time of finish, 9.10 p.m.

Séance 9. Again the cabinet was sprinkled or dotted with small luminous spots, and it was evident that some one was trying to build in the cloud that emanated from our medium's side. After a while we raised the medium to his chair, and several controls came to ask Mr. H. how the tortoise liked its new home. Ethel expressed her fear of the creature and told us that "Dolly and Gwladys played with it." Tim, as usual, had a very funny way of talking about the advent of the tortoise. He believed in physical resurrection now, for they had brought the tortoise out of the tomb. The time was spent in talking of the tortoise, and so we sang the Doxology and rose at 9.35 p.m.

Séance 10. Fakka Chief took possession and told us what a baby his canister was. It afterwards transpired that Fakka had shown himself to the medium in clairvoyant state, and that he had been frightened. That by the way. Then the work of developing for materialisation was proceeded with, and after half an hour, during which time nothing visible to the sitters happened, we

put the medium back in his chair. Then followed in quick succession William Stevens, Tim, Ethel, and Mary O'Shea. I forgot to mention that at the beginning of this séance several of the sitters heard a rushing sound, and our conductor was rather surprised when he was told that Mary O'Shea had gone around the circle in a materialised satin dress. The brevity of the records must be explained by stating that it requires a shorthand writer to follow the speakers to take down their speeches. We rose at 8.15 p.m. after singing the Doxology.

Séance 11. Fakka Chief told us to be extra careful at the next séance. It is needless to state that we promised to be careful. Next our medium was prostrate on the floor. I could distinctly hear the medium's deep nasal sounds and inside the cabinet a voice saying: "Peep-bo, Daddy!" It proved to be Mr. R.'s girl, Dolly. Lights were discernible on the cabinet, extending from three feet above the medium's head to within eight inches of the top of the cabinet. We were informed that some one well known to some of the sitters was trying to materialise. The attempt failed. So far this is the heaviest séance I have ever sat in. Perspiration trickled down my cheeks in streams. Then we raised the medium to a chair, and Fakka Chief left. We now had a series of controls. The difference in dialect of Arab, nigger, Yank, and also Welshman was remarkable, and I was forced to ask the Yank: "How are you so much of the Yank this evening?" He replied that the medium was in a perfect state for him to use him. Here let me state, in fairness to the medium and sitters, that we hold a collection at the close of each meeting to defray the cost of each article necessary for the use of the circle.

Séance 12. The night was warm, and so the medium pulled off his coat and placed it on the organ in the big hall. We led him into the séance room with Mr. D. behind him. Mr. P. locked the entrance to the hall, and so we sat for a few minutes. No sooner had the

medium entered the room than our friend Abdullah took possession. Again we searched the medium. Then we sang a hymn. Abdullah offered a prayer. We again sang. Then we noticed a change in the medium. Ethel had taken the place of Abdullah. She wanted to know why she couldn't speak like a young lady, seeing that several years had passed since she entered spirit life at four years of earthly age. Not being acquainted with those reasons, we could offer her no help. Suddenly in her childish way she cried out: "Hurrah!" We asked her what was the matter, and she told us we would soon know. Abdullah now took possession and told us he had been successful in bringing an apport into the room. He was in the middle of his story when he shouted to the children to leave the little things alone. "What naughty children," he said, "trying to hide an old man's goods!" "Shall I get them?" said Mr. H. "No," said Abdullah, "I will get them." To see Abdullah on the floor was a sight never to be forgotten. First he brought a nest, then two tiny blue eggs, spotted with brown. It would take me at least two hours to write an account of his manifestations of joy. I shall never forget the sight. When all was over Abdullah said to me: "You didn't look at the soles of his boots." The nature of the apport will testify to the unnecessary of searching the soles of the medium's boots. After expressing our thankfulness Abdullah left. Then we had Ethel, Tim, and Mary in succession. We sang the Doxology, and Ethel pronounced a childish yet philosophic benediction.

Séance 13. Abdullah was now controlling the medium and gave us a very useful discourse for fifteen minutes, during which time he hoped we would be true to our medium and keep him above monetary temptations. We did not get much that was visible at this séance. So we sang the Doxology and rose at 9.10 p.m.

Séance 14. Tim came. His coming was the sign that we should now be in a mirthful mood. I asked him

how they brought the nest to our séance room. He told me that at a future date he would devote an evening to an explanation of this phenomenon. Tim was in a merry mood, and for about half an hour he kept us laughing at his witticisms. He told us that a long face was not necessary to the best results. Next came a series of old controls, and, to wind up, Tim came in and said that Mendelssohn was about. I asked him what Mendelssohn. "Why," says he, "the musician. Can't you hear the tympani of his orchestra?" By this he referred to the heavy raindrops beating on the zinc roof of our séance room.

Séance 15. We took our seats at 8.10 p.m. We had searched medium and room. Abdullah no longer lays the medium on the floor. We sang. Then a prayer and another hymn. It is a close evening. The temperature of the room at least 85 degrees. It was apparent that nothing could be done this evening to overdo the medium. So it developed into an intellectual séance. Several controls spoke, and Ethel, who is beloved by all that come in contact with her, gave us fully twenty-five minutes' entertainment. There was nothing visible at this séance. We closed with the Doxology. Time, 9 p.m.

Séance 16. During the singing an old control of the late John Thomas Jones came, and a passage of debate between our conductor and the control resulted in the conductor being dissatisfied. However, this passed, and we were pleased when the jolly Timothy came to humour us a little. This night Mrs. P. gave further testimony of her clairvoyant powers, when Black Hawk reiterated her words. She had seen a wigwam in the green fields, and had described it to the writer. The medium, E. J. P., knew nothing of this, and I was satisfied with the test, which cannot be dealt with in a séance record. Then came good news. We were assured that materialisation would come when the nights got colder. For this we were extremely thankful. Now we sang

“Come one step nearer,” and voices were heard accompanying us. Mr. H. distinctly heard a child’s voice singing by his side. With this the meeting finished. Time, 9.35.

Séance 17. While we are singing another hymn Abdullah comes. He tells us that his chief, Black Hawk, is in the cabinet, beaming with smiles at the progress. He was proud to have such a sympathetic yet critical circle. He told us that a bird was to be brought into our circle from Central Africa. We thanked him, and each sitter in turn expressed their indebtedness to Abdullah and his friends for the great hope he had given them regarding death. Mr. H. told the circle how his son had given the sign of a compact between them before the son passed out of the body. Then we had Ethel, who told of a séance where she had trodden on Mr. H.’s favourite corn. Mr. H. admitted the fact. It may be of interest to note that the writer was present at this séance, and he very distinctly saw the shadowy forms of Ethel and Dolly. I shall deal fully with this séance apart from our materialisation séance in another record. Ethel was sorry that Mrs. H. was unwell, and hoped she would not be ill very long. She promised to go to her bedside and make her presence known. Nothing more transpired, so we closed the meeting with the Doxology. Time, 9.25 p.m.

Séance 18. Ethel came to tell Mr. H. that on the night of the previous séance he was preceded in the house by herself. She had tapped on the bedrail with what she described as a stick or hammer made from the aura given away from Mr. H.’s youngest daughter. This, Mr. H. said, was quite true, and deeply thanked Ethel for fulfilling her promise. Abdullah put Ethel to ask whether he should bring us the bird that night, or wait for Mrs. H.’s return to the circle. We all agreed to wait until each member was present, and Ethel was proud. Afterwards a stranger came. He proved to be Matthew Warlow, who had passed away, and who was a building

contractor in the town. He expressed sorrow for having ridiculed Mr. H.'s idea of death. "But," he added, "you were not so bad, Sam, as Bill Red Cow." This terminated the séance.

Séance 19. Tim came to ask how Mrs. H. was. Here he paused to make a reference to his dear mother. He seems still to wonder if he did right to steal. Mr. D. was noticeably under some influence, and so we wondered what was the matter. We were pleased, therefore, to hear a remark from Abdullah asking the person wishing to control Mr. D. to leave him alone and not disturb the "power." Several sitters noticed a cloud going from the end or tip of the circle to the cabinet in a wavy manner. Another sitter saw a form. This sitter is developing clairvoyance, and it is plain why others did not see it.

Séance 20. After the usual ceremonial Abdullah came and entertained us to the most brilliant address for fifteen minutes that I have yet heard. He sensed a condition of temptation with the medium, and asked us to take great care of him and shield him from the snares of the gold. This we assured him we would do. He told us how the medium had been offered a sum of money. However, that danger had passed, but there was still danger, for in fact a communication to the medium was still on the way. The first portion of this séance was spent in discussing the contents of a letter, and when we were nearly settled on a decision the phenomenon of the lamp again occurred. This time the light was turned up and then again turned down, as a sign that our decision had met with the approval of the controls. I shall have quite a lot to say upon this communication at another time. Some one was evidently trying to build now in the cabinet, for Abdullah coaxed the friend to be bold and come out to show himself. Then Mat Warlow came again and told us who had brought him to our meetings.

Séance 21. Mrs. H. is again convalescent, so we anticipate the promised bird. We sang a hymn, and

Abdullah prayed with such fervour that heaven on earth was really felt by the sitters. The medium was now in deep trance, and we were told that the bird was sure to come this evening. About nine o'clock Abdullah cried: "It's here, Mr. H." Then from inside the cabinet came the sweet chirp of a bird. Mr. H. opened the cabinet, and, lo and behold! on the floor was a handsome little bird. It flew about the room. It chirped and tweeted as though playing an accompaniment to our amazement. Then Abdullah asked would we like to have another bird to partner the one already brought. We answered that we would like to get a mate for it of its own variety. Then Abdullah asked us to sit on the following night for a short time only. After consideration we all agreed to meet at 9 p.m. Abdullah now left; and our medium, coming to himself, was almost frightened by the chirping of the bird. After a few minutes' conversation we closed the séance. Time, 9.15. An interesting time now followed by the medium trying to catch the bird. Having caught it, he handed it to Mr. H., who is the treasurer for our apports, and who is always pleased and proud to show them to any caller.

Séance 22. Abdullah said: "Let us have full light. What is the time, Mr. H.?" "Three minutes past nine," was the reply. "Go, Fakka," says Abdullah. We sing again, and Abdullah shouts: "It is here. What is the time, Mr. H.?" "Six minutes past nine," came the reply. Then it has only taken three minutes to bring a bird from Central Africa. Abdullah thanked us for our attention to his wishes and promised greater things. We all in turn marvelled at such a performance. The medium was now normal, and he was set to look for the bird. At length he found it and placed it in the cage along with the other bird. They proved to be male and female "crimson waxbill." We rose at 9.10 after the most remarkable séance of which I have any knowledge. It only lasted eight minutes; the rest of the time went to look for the bird.

Séance 23. While we sang again Abdullah controlled, and explained that he would not put his medium "out of the way" this evening owing to the strain of the previous week. Before he left he expressed sorrow for not being able to put the bird in the cage on the previous séance night, which was quite unnecessary seeing that he had performed so remarkable a feat. He left now and gave room for the one and only Tim. Tim was proud to be dead now, for the dead people are so much more clever than the living. He gave us a beautiful illustrative discourse for twenty minutes, during which time he exhorted us to take particular care of the medium. Temptations to professionalise his Divine gift were surrounding him, and it was hard for a poor man to withstand the temptations of riches. We gave him assurance for this, and he asked us whether we would like him to do something great for us.

Séance 24. First came Fakka Chief, but I am sorry that I cannot grasp all that this control says. His refinement, however, is noticeable by his mannerisms. Tim asked us if we would accept from him the gift of a "firefinch," a bird which is a native of the Western prairies, but of a migratory character. We expressed our willingness, and Tim told us, as Abdullah and Black Hawk had said oftentimes: "I owe you a debt of gratitude, and I hope some day to repay you that debt."

Séance 25. Abdullah expressed a desire to bring, instead of a firefinch, a bird from his native Egypt, to wit a Java sparrow. The reason for the change was explained, and after our consent he proceeded to bring us a Java sparrow. This is a non-migratory bird, and is only found in Egypt. After twenty minutes Abdullah told us that he had failed to bring in the bird, but that he would succeed at the next séance. Never was the attitude of a man so changed as was Abdullah's when he had to tell us he had failed. This was soon over, however, when he was reassured, and when he told Miss Lloyd not to kiss the bird when it came. Miss Lloyd

expressed the wish to be able to kiss Abdullah, and the sage control referred us to his features and made a comparison between himself and Black Hawk for beauty of features, but wound up with a reference to the purity of a soul. A more touching scene could not be imagined, for Abdullah kissed the hands of Mrs. H. as a token of respect and gratitude to all the sitters for the good wishes expressed. Now came Ethel and Tim. Tim reminded us that, although his gift for a time was overlooked, he would continue to work hard for the production of results. I asked him who was to occupy the platform on the following Sunday. He answered that he himself was going to give a funeral sermon on Sunday evening, the title of the sermon being "A Dying Creed." If what he gave us as a foretaste is a criterion, we shall have a glorious time. Tim left, and there came, for the first time during this series, little "Tommy the match-seller." Very interesting was his neat little speech, full of hope and knowledge. He is called in spirit life "Rosebud." This, he explained, was to keep him from memory of earth conditions. After this little friend went we sang the Doxology and closed at 9.15 p.m.

Séance 26. With Mr. D. I searched the room and cabinet. I took particular care of the cabinet draping. We searched the medium. We had just started another hymn when Abdullah shouted: "'Tis here!" With the shout we could see the bird flying about the room. We thanked Abdullah, and he asked if we would like to have another bird to mate the new arrival. We naturally answered in the affirmative. However, the controls did not go on with bringing in another bird. After a brief prayer Abdullah left, and Ethel came. In her childish way she ordered the other little spirit, Dolly, not to tickle the bird in the ribs. The medium was only under control four minutes when the bird was produced.

Séance 27. We securely bound the medium to the chair with a piece of rope three-eighths of an inch thick and measuring thirty-two feet. The lights were ordered

to be switched off, and our old and esteemed friend Abdullah took possession, and after we sang a hymn the control offered a prayer full of inspiration to aspiring inquirers after truth. We again sang, and in less than four minutes Abdullah told Mr. H.: "Go to your coat, hanging in the hall, and you will find a bird there. I failed to bring it through all the walls, so I deposited it in your pocket; take the elderly gentleman with you." Mr. Southey then got up and went with Mr. H. to his coat. After about one minute they came back, bringing with them a very beautiful bird called the Java sparrow, to mate the one brought to the circle two nights previous. After reseating themselves Messrs. H. and S. thanked Abdullah for his kindness. The next thing to happen was characteristic of the physical phenomena previously obtained through our medium. Little Ethel and Dolly were next heard coming to the centre of the circle and ringing toy bells and rattles. She (Ethel) came near my knees and touched me, but I asked her to go to strange sitters, so that they may feel the touch of the vanished hand, and speak, that they may hear the voice that was once still. She did so, and the American lady had the pleasure of kissing the doll brought from the cabinet by Ethel. Mr. M. and Mr. I. were next touched, and the latter almost fainted with that delightful fright that follows spirit-touches. It was now Mr. S.'s turn to "feel" the spirit. We were singing a little children's hymn when Mr. S. cried out: "There's somebody pulling my beard," and "Oh! now they are patting my head." Then Ethel in "direct" spirit voice said: "Silly old boy!" "Tread on his toes, Ethel," said Abdullah, and with the completion of the sentence Mr. S. said: "She's done so." Then the great Martin Lightfoot was plainly heard, knocking the ceiling and six feet above the heads of the sitters. We were astonished when Mrs. R. P., under the control of "Weggie," gave Mr. S. a reliable test regarding his late wife. But Mr. S. shall narrate his own story. The

séance now closed by singing the Doxology, after sitting considerably under the hour.

Séance 28. Our medium has taken leave for a holiday, but we sit in our usual places for thirty minutes just to keep up the conditions.

Séance 29. Our medium is still away, and Mrs. P.'s services were requisitioned. After sitting about ten minutes we noticed that some one was taking possession of her. It proved to be "Ruth," a girl-spirit who used to live in the town. In a lisping tone she gave us her history during her earth life and generally satisfied her questioners as to her identity. The agnosticism of this control is very pronounced, and her lisping gave her a position to command respect and encouragement.

Séance 30. Our medium is with us again. Abdullah expressed himself as being glad to meet us again; the whole circle welcomed him. Nothing of a physical nature transpired during the period of Abdullah's control, and when he left we heard Tim, W. Stephen, Ethel, and Lewis Evans, who wound up a very enjoyable evening.

Séance 31. Lights of bluish hue were noticed on the cabinet, and a hand was seen by some of the sitters on the cabinet high above the medium. The medium is on the floor, and so we lift him to his chair. We were rising at 9.20, and, as is usual with the sitters next the cabinet, I peeped in to see if anything had been brought into the cabinet. To our surprise a beautiful white chrysanthemum was brought in from a flower vase in the main hall. I gave the flower to Miss Lloyd, and this sitter said she would preserve it. The flower, I am sure, was not in the room before we sat.

Séance 32. Lights out were ordered. In an instant a voice in the cabinet said "Daddy! Daddy!" Then Mr. and Mrs. H. informed us that some three or four voices were singing in the cabinet. I was surprised to hear that one of the singers was one whom most of the sitters knew, viz., William Thomas, "Llanom." A few minutes later something hit me on the knee, but I took

no notice. I was not doomed to have peace, however, for again I was tapped on the knee, face, and chest in rapid succession. Then the sitter next to me said: "Some one is touching me." "Sit on her lap," Abdullah cries, and soon the sitter felt the weight of a form on her lap. It proved to be Ethel. Next, the sitters in the extreme end of the circle were tapped with what transpired to be a walking-stick, brought into the room from the main hall. It was almost laughable to hear the sitters remark at the way they managed to carry the stick from sitter to sitter, finally depositing it on the knees of two sitters. Being curious and seeing them so busy, I asked them if they could do one thing for me. I was told they would try. I asked them if they would carry a box of matches from the floor near me to another sitter. They did so. Not to be deceived, I asked them to carry something else to a sitter I would name. Abdullah replied that he would. Then I took from my pocket a rosette, a parliamentary token in the shape of a button with two ribbons attached. I placed it on my knee, and I asked where it was and what "it" was. The answer came like a dart, "It is a button, and it is on your left knee." "Then," I said, "take it to Miss Lloyd." Now came an anxious time. I was being subjected to several little taps, until at last I distinctly felt tiny fingers feeling for the button on my knee. At last they found it and pushed it down between my knees until it got fast. Only those who have had similar experiences can imagine how I felt when the little hand took away the button and laid it on the arm of the person mentioned in my request. Next, the mat under our feet began to move. My father's feet were lifted from the mat, and some one was evidently rolling it towards the cabinet. Next, Mrs. Bodenham's both feet were lifted, and the mat rolled in my direction; then I felt a tap on the shin, and I accused Mrs. Bodenham of kicking me. I felt the mat moving, and at the same time I felt the medium. I was satisfied it was not he who was rolling the mat. I was next surprised by my chair being lifted, for two of its legs were on the mat. Then there was a

gust of wind. The mat had been thrown into the middle of the circle. By Mr. Cled Davies' request, the control shouted: "All of you, pack up the mat." I felt the breeze when the rush was made, and the mat was shifted. After this the light was ordered up, and what met our gaze was a scene of confusion, the mat in a huddled heap and the stick, matchbox, and button where I have already described. Abdullah now left us, and we closed our séance with the Doxology. I made a present of the button to Miss Lloyd as a token from Abdullah, and she prized the matchbox so much that she kept that also. William Thomas gave the stick to Cled Davies. Thus was the greatest séance I have attended brought to a close. Time, 9.30. Whosoever cries, "Fraud!" should get this test experience.

Séance 33. It was evident that there was no serious or heavy physical phenomenon to happen, for the medium was stretched out for materialising purposes. We were enjoined to enter into bright spiritual talk, and Abdullah was seemingly in good tune. Nothing happened at this séance, save the few controls who contributed to the intellectual entertainment.

Séance 34. Medium in a deep trance, and a heavy power is felt. We anticipate nothing great, and we leisurely chat. Keeping our ears open, we may hear some direct voice, but, with heavy rain falling on the outside of our séance room and the chatter of the sitters, none but Mr. Hawkins heard the voice. Again we rise without having seen any materialising entity. When we dislinked, to close the séance, we were told that on the next evening some phenomena would occur.

Séance 35. It was evident that our medium was suffering the strain of the previous week's hard work. Abdullah informed us that there was some one in the cabinet who wished to control, but it was not advisable at this juncture to allow such a one to come. A succession of controls came and talked for a while, and Tim came in to close the meeting at 9.30.

Séance 36. We take our seats at 8.10, and we are

told to sing with harmony, for it is significant of the harmony of the temperament of the sitters. Fifty minutes were next taken to further the development for materialisation. It is obvious that the controls are labouring under a disadvantage. Some one or other is absent from the séance at each meeting, and until all the sitters are present we cannot hope to have what we purpose sitting for. It transpires that one of our sitters is laid up with illness, and after a few minutes' conversation we rose at 9.30.

Séance 37. Mr. Powell very appealingly offered the invocation. Soon Abdullah was in possession of the medium and asked me to help the medium in platform work, the strain of platform and séances being more than enough for him. This night was marked by some of the sitters seeing small lights on the cabinet. Evidently materialisation is coming. We are assured of that by Tim, Ethel, and William Stephen.

Séance 38. We take our seats at 8.10. After singing Mr. Powell was controlled by "Ellen Carlyle." After this control Abdullah came, and we were told that "before the festive bells rung we should see a face." Judging from the way the medium was breathing, some one was evidently trying to build up, just outside the cabinet. However, nobody was visible to the sitters; and at 9.35 we rose, after a very heavy séance.

Séance 39. Our medium was unwell, and so we did not expect anything. However, Abdullah and Fakka gave us the encouragement necessary to séances such as we are now having. We know the symptoms of the medium's illness by the heavy speaking.

Séance 40. The medium was repeatedly pointing to the cabinet, but only those who are clairvoyant could see anything. We were assured that success was sure to come in the stipulated time.

Séance 41. The fateful third sitting has come, and we are early in our places. The medium is early, and we commence at 8 p.m.

(Here the records come to an unexpected end.)

THE MYSTERIOUS MRS. B.

THE public interest aroused in Mrs. B. was due to the strong and unswerving support given her by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. And it was after I had carefully examined the evidence placed before me by Sir Arthur that I determined to have a private séance with this medium.

It was more of a challenge than an offer to submit evidence that was made by Sir Arthur to me when I saw him at his home at Crowborough. I had taken the Thomas brothers down to see him, and he and Lady Doyle heard from the brothers themselves what had happened at the *Sunday Express* séance. Sir Arthur was extremely keen to bring the controversy on spiritualism to a final test.

"I should like to lift this controversy to a higher plane," he said to me. "The physical phenomena such as you have been describing are, as I have always insisted, rather crude and material manifestations of outside power. I have a test ready to hand which would deal with the real question at issue—the survival of our loved ones and the possibility of our communicating with them."

Briefly, Sir Arthur's suggestion to me was that representatives of five other newspapers should come down to his house and examine certain letters that had been written to him respecting a medium in London to whom he had sent those wives or mothers who applied to him for direction or consolation.

"They are people whom I have never seen, and in many cases they write to me immediately after their interview," continued Sir Arthur, "describing exactly what had occurred and how far they were convinced that they had been in touch with their dear ones."



"MRS. B."

Sir Arthur's idea was to place the originals of all these letters, with names and addresses and every information, in the hands of this committee of five other newspaper men besides myself. I rather liked the idea, and a few days later half a dozen of us went down to Crowborough to examine this evidence. There were Mr. Dunn, of the *Daily Mail*, Mr. Harvey, of the *Daily Chronicle*, Mr. Rogers, of the *Evening Standard*, Mr. Unwin, of the *Daily Sketch*, a photographer, and myself. Sir Arthur placed before us about thirty letters. There was one in which the writer pathetically referred to a "conversation" she had had with her son, who had died at the front. When the mother asked him for the manner of his death he evaded the question, saying that it was not well for her to know. The mother persisted, however, and finally the boy confessed that he had shot himself!

Another of the letters described how at a séance with Mrs. B. the writer conversed with his dead wife, who was of Danish birth. He addressed a remark to her in Danish, and immediately the reply came back in English! (I afterwards asked Mrs. B. if she understood Danish, and she replied that she did not know a single word of it.)

Another case was that of a husband who had not written from the front for five months before he had been killed. The wife was able to speak to her husband through Mrs. B., and he now declared how remorse-stricken he was at having left her without means. Asked why he had not written, the man replied that he had written, but "that darned fool of a Ginger had not posted the letters," "Ginger" apparently referring to his orderly.

Sir Arthur's own experiences with Mrs. B. were not always successful, but at one sitting the medium described a great personal friend—a lady who had died two years since. Sir Arthur was sure that he was conversing with this lady, since she used a phrase which was only known to her very intimate friends.

Mrs. B. also gave Sir Arthur and Lady Conan Doyle an exact description of a nephew, Alec Forbes, and then went on to describe an officer who, she said, had a gold coin. This at once recalled to Sir Arthur an incident which he had long ago forgotten. Many years ago a friend named Malcolm—who had since been killed at Mons—when a medical student prescribed some medicine for Sir Arthur, who laughingly said: "As this is your first case, I'll give you the good old-fashioned fee," and handed him a spade guinea, which Malcolm had ever since worn upon his watch chain. The medium could not possibly have had any knowledge of this incident.

The third sitting he had with her was just after his son died. His name was Arthur Kingsley L. N. Conan Doyle, but except in the home circle the name Kingsley was never used. Yet the medium, who could not possibly have known this, said during the séance: "Kingsley is here," and added that he had remarked that he was sorry to "barge in"—an expression he often used. "My boy tried to console me at his death," added Sir Arthur, "and said that in any case he would not have stayed in England, as he had intended to go abroad in the medical service. He told me that he had suffered pains in the lungs—which was quite true, because he died from pneumonia after serving in the army three years. He referred to other friends who had passed over and said: 'When I was alive I did not believe in spiritualism. Now I believe in it. I was a chuckle-headed ass not to believe it.' At a fourth sitting with Mrs. B. I spoke with a brother of mine, a brigadier-general who had been killed, who told me that he would have liked to live for another three months so that he could have seen the end of the war.

"I do believe in Mrs. B.," Sir Arthur declared to me. "She has satisfied me thoroughly that she employs no trickery. She will not be tempted by money, she does not put her fee at an unreasonable figure, and she approaches a séance in a real religious spirit."

Some little while after this *Truth* entered the lists by sending a representative to Mrs. B. and afterwards publishing a long account of the sitting he had with the medium. It was, as one might have expected, an "exposure"; the representative in effect said that Mrs. B. had obtained what little information she was able to give him by telepathy, and *Truth* went on to say:

"The inevitable conclusion is that Mrs. B. had either consciously humbugged Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and twenty-four out of twenty-six of the people he has sent to her."

It looked therefore, when I tried to fix up an interview with Mrs. B., that, as a fellow-journalist, I should experience some difficulty in persuading her that I was an earnest and unbiassed investigator. Mrs. B. did in fact reply that she was "sick to death of publicity," but as Sir Arthur had written to her about me she gave me an appointment for a fortnight ahead.

Let me say at once that I went to Mrs. B. expecting no results at all. I was on that particular day, as it happened, in a very indifferent mood, and had it not been that I had made the appointment I should not have troubled any more about it. Also, to tell the truth, I had no heartfelt grief that required assuaging, and there was no special spirit with whom I wished to get into contact—with the exception perhaps of my mother, who I felt sure would not avail herself of this means of communication.

I kept Mrs. B. waiting half an hour. Her husband admitted me. He had, she afterwards told me, only recently been discharged from the army. After I had been ushered into a drawing-room, which was decorated with the charm of simplicity, Mrs. B. came in. She is a woman of certain culture, of unmistakable Northern antecedents. As I feared, she had had rather a hard time of it while her husband was in the army, and she looked as if she needed a well-earned rest. She confessed as much to me. Mrs. B. comes of good stock,

and her two brothers offer further evidence of this. One is a Doctor of Science; and the other, a young man of twenty-two, is a regular captain in the Veterinary Corps. A third brother, who was killed in the war, was also a Doctor of Science. Mrs. B. makes no pretensions of giving sittings "for the sake of the science"; she accepts her fees in the same spirit as a clergyman accepts his. Just as the latter regards himself as a disciple of his Church, so does Mrs. B. regard herself as a disciple of the spiritualist Church. But Mrs. B. is not blatant or over-confident. On the contrary, she is meek and nervous. She told me that she had wept for three days after reading the "horrid criticism" in *Truth*, "although," she added, "she had received a number of letters and presents from sympathisers." The *Truth* exposé had, as a matter of fact, given her an unsought-for advertisement. She pointed out, I ought to add, that she gave no interview to the representative of *Truth*, but to a lady who asked if she might "bring her husband in to take notes." The man had never put a question to her, nor had she addressed a word to him. Nevertheless I read the *Truth* account, and it seemed to me that its representative had written just the account I should expect from scores of my colleagues in Fleet Street. They simply will not give the slightest credence to this little-known science, and their "investigations" are always in the nature of a good and amusing journalistic "story." The one or two newspapers that have set out to investigate the claims of spiritualism in at all a serious vein have very quickly dropped the attitude of the serious investigator, and have continued in the "light" journalistic vein.

I have to record, nevertheless, that my first interview with Mrs. B. was decidedly disappointing. In this I find myself in company with Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, whose first sittings with Mrs. B. were similarly without pointed results. Mrs. B., it seemed to me, endeavoured in her quiet way to weigh me up. While she spoke in a

quiet but pleasant manner of her experiences and her troubles she nevertheless tried, it seemed to me, to read what was passing in my mind ; but, as I have said, I was in good mental form that day, and was giving nothing away. Following the example of the *Truth* representative, I proceeded to test her from a telepathic standpoint by persistently thinking hard of a spurious Aunt Maria. I never had an Aunt Maria and do not know of the existence of "such a person," but all day previous to my visit and all the next morning I thought of Aunt Maria and endeavoured to pass this on to Mrs. B. even as my sceptical colleague had done. But the "telepathic" wave failed ; Mrs. B. mentioned several other persons, but never a word about Aunt Maria. So in desperation I switched on to Uncle Timothy. I carried on the conversation with as much politeness as monosyllabic responses would admit, but all the time kept up a mental monologue of "Uncle Timothy ! Uncle Timothy !" but Uncle Timothy, like Aunt Maria, failed to mature. Yet Mrs. B. was game. She went on to describe one or two spirit-friends "who were much interested in my work." I had warned her, however, before the sitting that I did not place much reliance upon descriptions which might indeed fit numerous departed friends, and that I would pay little heed to her details. I told her when the sitting had begun that, unless she could give me some definite and unusual proof, I should regard the séance as a failure. Therefore while she was occupied in describing a benevolent old gentleman with grey hair and spectacles I was actually occupied in trying to discover whether a face at the window of the house opposite was a materialised spirit or an optical delusion. Mrs. B. went on to describe an airman whose christian name was "Eric," and I pricked up my ears because it so happens that I did know of such a man who had been killed. I gave no sign, however, and simply said when she questioned me that it would be better to get his full name. This she was unable to do.

Then a girl spirit came on the scene. Like the old gentleman, she had known me since childhood, and was extremely beautiful—"the most beautiful girl I have ever seen," said Mrs. B.—and she was very anxious to get into contact with me. She gave the name as "Jennie" at first, but subsequently modified this to "Annie." I fear I did not regard all this as of much consequence, and so I continued to solve the problem of the "ghost" opposite. It must have been disconcerting for Mrs. B. when in the middle of her descriptions of my spirit-friends I suddenly said to her: "Do you see that face in the house opposite?" *And she replied that she could not.* I began to wonder things, when the face appeared again, and it turned out to be an old lady, very much alive, who was reading in the shadow of the curtains! It was another ghost that failed.

Now, while I am ready to admit that I was not a very sympathetic sitter that morning, I am quite prepared to aver that Mrs. B. may be a perfectly genuine person and may possess the gift of clairvoyance. But at that first sitting I had no direct evidence whatever of any spirit communion. She admitted to me that she was experiencing great difficulty in "getting into touch"; she was as disappointed as I was, and made me promise to come and see her again. She purposely fixed the sitting to suit me on the following Sunday, adding that she had never made an appointment for Sunday before.

(I have written up these notes before the second sitting lest the mental impressions will have been influenced by the events of the first séance.)

* * * * *

I mentioned that in order to have an unbiassed opinion in sifting Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's evidence we formed a committee of six. On the way back in the train I recounted to my colleagues some of the experiences I had had in Wales and elsewhere (which I have recorded in this book) and they were, at any rate, impressed. They asked me, as many others of my colleagues have

done, to fix up a test séance at which they could judge for themselves. I promised to do this. In the meantime my friend Mr. John Lewis had arranged to introduce me to Mrs. Duffus, a lifelong supporter of spiritualism and the sponsor of several good mediums. I thought Mrs. Duffus might help me to arrange this séance. Mr. Lewis was especially anxious to get me a seat at a séance with Craddock, the materialising medium, of whom Mrs. Duffus was a great supporter.

Mrs. Duffus motored up to London in order to meet me, and I found her to be a cheery, matter-of-fact person, full of energy and of a perfectly frank disposition. She said, quite bluntly, that she had come up from the country in order "to inspect me"—to see, in short, whether I was a fit and proper person to sit in the select circle with the only medium in England who was said to be able to produce a materialisation. Evidently I passed muster, for Mrs. Duffus at the end of the interview promised to arrange a séance with Craddock. She mentioned in a casual manner some of her experiences which almost took my breath away. Yet her worldly demeanour and her common-sense were beyond question. "These things which are so amazing to the ordinary person," she said, "are quite ordinary occurrences with us, so much so that we scarcely trouble to mention them. And it is rather like casting pearls . . . Why, I have seen the spooks—that's what I prefer to call them—walk arm in arm in twos and threes in my house. My husband has been dead for nearly fifteen years, but really he is not dead to me. He comes to me very often, and we have a rare old chat just as of yore. He embraces me and kisses me—always, curiously enough, on the corner of the lips. Another strange fact is that my lips always crack after he has kissed me. If I don't happen to come near enough he—just pulls me! . . ."

Mrs. Duffus in the course of further conversation mentions in the same casual manner a number of other accidents.

"The other day I spoke to a spirit who had been dead for over a thousand years. By the bye," she breaks off to ask, "what is a diva? . . . Oh, a wise man, is he? Well, that explains it. There is another spirit who comes to us often, and he calls himself a diva. It was he who told us that the other spirit was a thousand years old. This ancient spook, by the way, seems to be cloaked in a garb of blue, and emits what look like electric sparks from the head."

Another fact that is elicited in this jolly little woman's conversation is that the "language" in the spirit world is by thought alone. Spirits do not speak; they converse in thoughts. The spirit who was a thousand years old could not speak. "He would just nod," Mrs. Duffus told me; "he had forgotten the language of the earth. He had in fact descended from a very high plane, as a good many other spirits had, in order to give solace to those who had suffered bereavement in the great war." It is astonishing to hear this vivacious woman telling these weird and wonderful tales with as much *sang froid* as if she were discussing a new *revue*. To her there is no such a state as bereavement; to her the dead live.

"My little boy is buried next to his father," she went on. "On the anniversary of their passing over I always put flowers on their graves. A few days ago it was the anniversary of my husband's death, so I took some violets along. It was pouring with rain. Next day my little spirit-boy appeared to me. 'We were with you at the cemetery yesterday, Mum dear, but you didn't put any flowers on my grave—I only had rain,' he chid me.

"Wasn't that pretty!" Mrs. Duffus added, and I felt that it was not only pretty, but pretty startling. However, I would have an opportunity of examining this first-hand. We arranged a séance, and she said in parting: "You will then see real spooks."

* * * * *

Now I have given Mrs. Duffus's conversation because I believe her to be a perfectly credible witness, and I

accept her testimony regarding spiritualism with as little hesitation as I would of a wireless operator regarding sound waves.

It amounts in both cases to this: what understanding of psychology—what experience of men and women—have I had? Now I have met in the course of my journalistic experiences, in England and in most parts of the world, men and women whom I would not trust with a cats'-meat barrow. On the other hand, I have accepted the testimony and written up stories from the evidence of hundreds of men and women in whom I have believed. So it depends on my record as a public investigator whether my judgment in accepting her as a credible witness is to be relied upon or not. For I am afraid that the séance arranged by Mrs. Duffus never came off. At the last minute I received a telegram saying that there had been a hitch in the arrangements. The medium had discovered that I was a journalist as well as an author, and was afraid of newspaper publicity. In a word, Craddock had cried off.

On the day that had been fixed for the séance with Craddock I went down to the west of England, and the record of that visit appears elsewhere in this book. As I have hinted, my experiences in that part were of a very unpleasant character, and affected me for several days afterwards. The eerie feeling, however, passed off; and I was able to conclude these investigations in the same dispassionate manner as when I started. As a final look-around I called on Mr. Foster in Regent Street, and had another talk with his North-West Indian spirit control, Whitey.

Mr. Foster had repeatedly asked me to call, because he felt sure that Whitey would be of use to me, and so, after several delays, I managed to call before this book finally went to press. Mr. Foster has an office in Regent Street; and here, through the control of Whitey, he has effected several cures.

No time is wasted in preliminaries. The medium

sits down, breathes deeply, jerks his head, and in a trice the lips are shaping in the curious manner of the Indian control. "Zess, zess," he begins, "me, me"—he bangs his chest violently—"Whitey mems zoo," which means that Whitey remembers our little séance at Mr. Lewis's office. Whitey goes on to say that he can only repeat the message he gave me then, and that I must explore the sea, with its shadows and rocks, until I reach the new-found land of sunshine.

"Then you will proceed upon your sunlit ways; then you will realise the omnipotence of what is greatest in continuous life—that is the first step to health." In further words I gather that what Whitey requires of me is "faith."

There are three of us at this séance—or shall I say four with Whitey? Mrs. Foster is there, and to her Whitey occasionally addresses the question, "Don't zoo see squaw?" and proceeds to tell me that Whitey is not a "fanumacturer," for the Indian chief is somewhat good at Spoonerisms.

"Faith unlocks the doors for the reception of energy" is another of Whitey's epigrams, and warning me for a sceptic, he says: "New ideas are always laughed at till they are old. Zat is so? zess?" I tell Whitey that if I am to back him publicly he must give me some definite proof, and he says: "Whitey sees some drums running round and round, and some sticks pulling off papers . . . sewing, cutting and putting together, and tying up together . . . lots of books coming out . . . Why does Whitey see books? They are on top of one another; they are being rushed away."

"What's the name of the book, Whitey?" I asked promptly.

"It seems to Whitey there is indecision about the title, not about the inside, but the way it should be shown on the outside . . . ah, I hear—'The Experiences and Investigations.' Zess, zess, you will get a splendid reception from the book."

Now, of course, Mr. Foster was aware that I was getting out a new book on spiritualism, but he did not know that I was up to a few hours before in doubts about the title, and that I had thought about using the sub-title of "A Popular Record of an Independent Investigation," but Whitey failed to tell me the name of the title I had in mind, and which, in fact, I have used. He said he could see the books, could, indeed, see them being printed and sewn and wheeled off, and yet he could not read the title. That part of the business was certainly most unconvincing. What he told me were mere vague generalisations. "It will do more for you, than anything you have done before," he says emphatically. The 'friends on the other side' will not let you alone, and Whitey knows you are a good man."

But I will not be put off. "Try and get the title, Whitey."

"Whitey will try." The medium breathes heavily. "Have you got 'My' in it?"

"No," I reply.

"Oh, well, if Whitey asks questions you think he guess. Well, Whitey will tell you what Whitey sees. Whitey first saw 'My Experiences' and then your name."

"Ask them to spell the name out to you, Whitey," prompts Mrs. Foster.

"Whitey will try," is the reply.

A pause of three minutes and then the hopeless cry, "They will not tell Whitey, and Whitey cannot see anything . . . And they have just told Whitey 'he asked for a sign, and no sign shall be given.'"

"Oh, that is rather inconsistent," I exclaim.

"That is what they tell Whitey," the Indian repeats.

Finally he describes me in an outlandish country under secret orders, "in a corner working by yourself and taking big risks and doing something adventurous in an uncivilised part . . . Then you arouse the suspicions of the people, and you have to escape, but I see

you writing very quickly and saying to yourself: 'Oh, I've got something very good.' You are very good at secret service, bamboozling people; you pretend to be green, but you know all the time; and now you ought to rest, for your too many adventures are using up your nerves. Whitey wants you to see the angels, to hear the angels, to hear the inside spiritualness of the trees and clouds and sunshine." And referring to his healing powers, Whitey says: "People who are ill come to Whitey, and Whitey's Great White Spirit heals them. You must come to Whitey." And he adds prophetically: "You write in the great book: 'W. W. is a failure'" (W. W. meaning White Wing . . .).

* * * * *

But is Whitey a failure? Is he in fact a spoof on the path of his medium, Mr. Foster? Did Mr. Foster throw up his position as general manager to a large Bristol firm, where he had been for twenty years, in order to pick up an occasional half-guinea in Regent Street by fraudulent means? And why should he throw up his successful preaching as a Methodist in order to preach spiritualism? Does Whitey exist? The sceptic will say that you have only Mr. Foster's word for it, and that his pantomimics are the result of much rehearsing. On the other hand, Whitey has not only been heard, but seen, by different clairvoyants on several occasions. Mrs. Osborne Leonard has seen him, so have several others, whose names Mr. Foster gave me.

The medium himself has seen him and, by a curious coincidence, came across a painting of "Hiawatha" by Hassall in the Bristol Art Gallery which he declared to be the very image of Whitey. As a fact, Whitey claims that he inspired Longfellow in the writing of the famous poem.

As a healer Mr. Foster records a number of wonderful successes, and since I myself had some throatal trouble, he begged me to put Whitey to the test. There was

nothing to lose in accepting this offer, and so on the following morning I had my first "cure."

Mr. Foster soon got under control, and chanting in Indian fashion, began trekking, as only an Indian can, round the chair which he had placed in the centre of the room. Then he came over to me and guided me gently to it.

"Dr. Whitey!" he said with a grin. Then he began touching my head in a soft and soothing manner which suggested the hypnotist. That is what Whitey calls "sensing" his patient. Then by rubbing his two hands together very violently he produced a tremendous heat, and by placing his hand on the bridge of my nose he effected some relief. "Whitey will get his spirit fingers to where the pain is, and will burn it away," he said.

Treatment of this sort continued for some little time, and it amused me more than anything else. At the same time I was struck by the extraordinary confidence expressed by Whitey that he could cure me. Now the point is this: four Harley Street doctors have declared that an operation is necessary. Mr. Foster's Indian control says it is not, and that he can cure this by spirit treatment. Since Mr. Foster is unwilling to accept any fees until a cure is effected, I am puzzled to know what he has to gain by his persistent assertion that he can effect a cure. Faith cannot remove solid bone. We shall see. In the meantime I have only the opportunity to record a momentary improvement on the afternoon following the séance. It might have been my imagination, but if Whitey through Mr. Foster is able to give my imagination such a healthy fillip, why I think I will just go on with these séances until he wills the bone away!

* * * * *

My second séance with Mrs. B. was, alas! a failure. She was obviously ill at ease and conscious that I had come there to write her up. She was at a loss for expression, and was embarrassed and diffident.

"Well, I can only describe what I see," she said in desperation. "You have the most remarkable aura I have ever seen before in my life . . . It is a rainbow of wonderful colours, and it forms a bridge between you and the other world. It would almost suggest that the friends on the other side are weaving a bridge of beautiful iridescence that will enable them to get into contact with you . . . Do you know each colour symbolises a different spirit? The pink symbolises a child, the violet motherhood, and so on . . . This wonderful psychic rainbow or aura is only perceptible with psychic people . . . You are, of course, psychical—extremely sensitive to conditions. Do you know what I mean? If you enter a house you at once feel and know the conditions, the harmony or otherwise, of the people therein. You are very sensitive to people's actual conditions. You can at once peer below the surface of their outward expressions and feel their real moods . . .

"You are also psychometrical . . . Do you know that through the hidden power on the other side of the veil you will be saved to do a great deal of useful work on this earth? Let me see if I can tell you another thing—well, perhaps I won't!"

"Why?" I ask.

"The spirits around you are numerous, but they gather round as a crowd would at a motor accident, out of curiosity in the proceedings."

I do not think it would be either fair to Mrs. B. or of interest to my readers if I were to go on giving the details of the séance at any great length. Most of it was on the lines I have already indicated. Mrs. B., as I have said, failed, but I would hesitate to say that she has always failed. Perhaps other people are more helpful sitters. I could not recognise the name of one spirit-friend who hovered near me. Mrs. B. once gave the name of Nellie. When I said I did not know Nellie she said: "Perhaps it is Annie." Then she gave the name of Clara, and when that failed she said that it might

have been Sarah. She also gave the name of Gertie, and when that elicited no recognition on my part said it might have been Bertie. Mrs. B. also described in detail a man who purported to be my father and a woman who was supposed to be my mother, but I failed to recognise either of them from my own knowledge or from the knowledge of my family.

I am very sorry for Mrs. B. because I feel that she made a genuine effort to satisfy me. I offered her a fee, but she said that she preferred not to take it, since the séance was a failure.

SIR IAN HAMILTON'S ADVENTURE

THE majority of my friends were amused at my telling of the haunted house ; of my coming up to town ; of my uneasiness, which gradually mounted up to terror, that night in my room ; of my walk next morning, when the Presence endeavoured to throw me down under taxis ; of my getting so frightened that I determined to continue my journey in a tube ; of the spirit trying to throw me down on to the electric rail and of my being wedged between the platform and the carriage ; of my being dragged into the train and fainting for the first time in my life, and of my subsequent depression. Some made light of my adventures, others feared for my mental balance, while there were a few who seriously warned me of the consequences if I got myself mixed up with such fearful afrites as elementals.

One day I was walking down Oxford Street, hardly daring to venture, after my last narrow escape, to cross the road. As I stood in great agony of mind trembling on the edge of the pavement, who should I see, easily negotiating this dangerous passage with a hop, skip, and a jump, but the ex-Commander-in-Chief of the Dardanelles Expedition ? He seemed so full of life, so real, that, when he spoke to me and shook me by the hand, it had the effect upon me of swallowing a double whisky and a small soda. I felt, however, I could not possibly leave him, and so turned back with him and walked along towards Bond Street. My mind was far too full of my dreadful experiences to enable me to talk of anything else, and so I unbosomed myself to the General. He endeavoured to argue with me and to explain away all my symptoms. He said he was sure if I would take

his advice and go and see a certain holy nun she would exorcise this evil spirit. It was all of no avail—I could not be convinced. Turning suddenly on to me, the General said: “Where the devil do you suppose this thing is now, Moseley?” I pointed to my feet and said simply: “There it is.” On this the General remarked, rather hastily: “Well, Moseley, I am sorry I have to leave you, but I really must turn in here and get my hair cut.”

The singular thing is that from that moment I felt better. In fact, I felt quite well, and have remained so ever since. A few weeks later I encountered the General again. He at once asked me how I was and whether I was still being dogged by my familiar spirit. I said no, that I had now completely shaken it off. He then remarked, somewhat seriously I thought: “I believe the thing is some sort of fire bug or something, and that you passed it on to me.” I asked him what he meant, and he then told me that the first thing that occurred to him after he left me was that the hairdresser, a respectable man whom he had known for many years, snipped him on the ear with his scissors and then explained he was feeling very queer. That night he went to dine with some friends. There was a numerous company present. *The moment he entered the room all the lights went out.* His host ran down to the dining-room to see about putting in another fuse. He was so long away that Sir Ian followed him to find out if he could help. *The moment he entered the dining-room all the lights went out.* He ran upstairs to the drawing-room again. As he opened the doors, *without any apparent cause, all the lights went on.* Throughout the night sparks from the light flew about the room, and they behaved in so curious a fashion that several of the guests declared the house must be haunted.

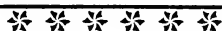
Whether this creature had anything to do with the falling of a stone Cupid on to the head of a fair friend of the General's he is unable to say. As is well known,

the Cupid until that moment had remained so motionless on its shelf that spiders had spun webs over it. The General was passing by at the time, and certainly it is the case that, as if it had exhausted itself by this last act of malice, it then disappeared. Let us hope it went back home.

CONCLUSION

"My experiences in South Wales were healthy and instructive; my experiences in the west of England show me that there are dangerous and dark forces behind the study of occult science. I thoroughly enjoyed my investigations before I touched on the more unpleasant and unhealthy fringe; I think that the case for the continuation of consciousness is proved beyond a doubt, but as I have said it is not a subject for any Tom, Dick or Harry, and so far as I am concerned I am sure it were best to leave the probing of the veil of death to scientists, to whose province it belongs.

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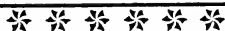
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